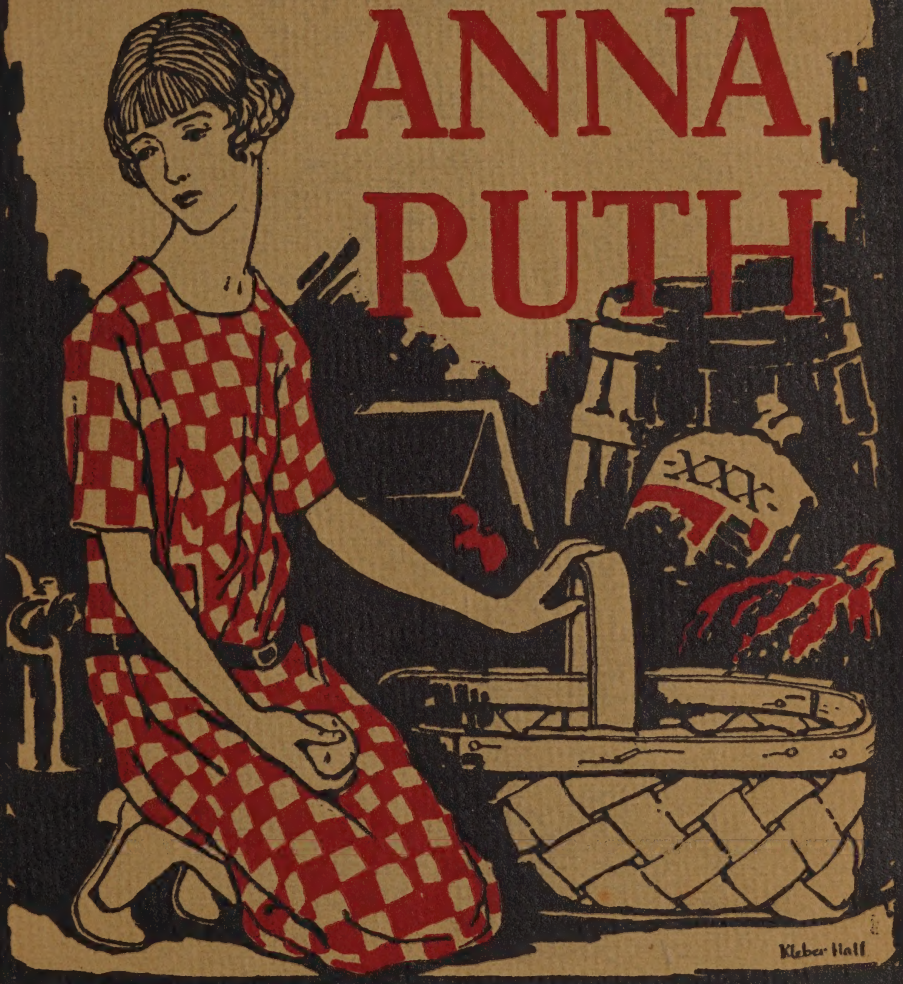
Keller's ANNA RUTH SINGMASTER



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Elsie Singmaster

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ELSIE SINGMASTER

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KELLER'S ANNA RUTH

KELLER'S ANNA RUTH

BY

ELSIE SINGMASTER

Author of 'Basil Everman,' 'Ellen Levis,'
'The Hidden Road,' etc.

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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KELLER'S ANNA RUTH

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PART I

KELLER'S ANNA RUTH

* * *

CHAPTER I

MISS HARRIET'S ARBOR

At half-past two on the afternoon of an almost intolerable Sunday in July, fourteen-year-old Anna Ruth Keller stood in her bedroom at the back of her father's house in Duke Street in Middlebury. Long-limbed, round-headed, blue-eyed, with reddish hair shorn by the economical hand of Keller, she had a singularly odd aspect. Her legs and arms, protruding from a faded green gingham dress, were too long, her hair was too closely cropped, and the fixedness of her deep-set, long-lashed eyes and the tension of her body indicated excitement too violent for her years. Color flooded her cheeks, then, ebbing, left her unnaturally pale.

She looked to be and was a silent creature. Having been unable to speak plainly until she was ten, she spoke now only when speech was unavoidable. Her method of communication with her fellow mortals was obedience; she obeyed her father, the divinely decreed arbiter of

her fate who exercised all his prerogatives; her mother, whose will had always to be guessed at; her seventeen-year-old sister Juliet, who took no unfair advantage; her sixteen-year-old brother Roger, who did; her teachers, and all others set in authority over her. She would have liked also to obey May Hurd, the sheriff's daughter, admired from afar; Miss Randall, the civic nurse, whose ministrations to the sick and needy brightened existence in Duke Street; Miss Harriet Dennison, her ideal; and especially Arther Wynne, the sun of her existence. At present her eyes glowed, her cheeks burned, and her body vibrated because at three o'clock she was going to visit Miss Harriet, and in all probability Arthur would be visiting her also.

Her room contained a bed, a bureau, a chair, and, to speak with entire accuracy, a window shade and gas fixture. Bed and bureau and chair were of cheap pine, the window shade was cheap brown Holland, the gas fixture iron. In the closet hung a brown woolen coat, a red woolen dress, and a blue felt hat, inherited from Juliet after three years' wear. The room was clean, the bed smoothly made, the clothing neatly hung, the scantily furnished bureau orderly — beyond this no praise would be honest. Juliet had once

been a fellow occupant of the bed, but, desiring solitude, had moved to a cot in the third story, where in summer's heat and winter's cold she slept alone. Anna Ruth knew a queer secret about Juliet — she had a little prayer-book and she went often to the Catholic Church. The Kellers were not ardent Protestants, but they were certainly not Catholics, and Anna Ruth believed her father would be angry. Therefore she said nothing; she liked Juliet to have what she wanted, except when Juliet moved into the third story. Then her heart almost broke; she could never have abandoned a sister.

Beyond the flat tin roof of the kitchen rose the blank wall of Mr. Holland's garage and over all hung a blue sky lit by a blazing sun. The roof offered some material for the imagination, since it was painted like the roof of a hut in a battle area. Keller had begged the paint, little by little, and the poor cannot ask uniformity. There was still another kind of material for the imagination in the odor of spoiled vegetables rising from the tiny yard. To another it might have suggested the neglect or dilatoriness of an important public servant; to Anna Ruth it suggested tragedy. Keller's child knew no cheerful charging of spoiled vegetables to profit and loss.

Having gazed about her room, Anna Ruth turned absently and went into Roger's and thence into her mother's and father's. Roger's bed was a cot, his bureau an old washstand, and his window looked out toward the blank wall of Miss Dennison's house. The room was kept immaculate by Anna Ruth, but Roger's occupancy was betrayed by the odor of very poor tobacco.

Roger denied that he smoked; he said it was impossible not to acquire the odor in the garage where he worked during vacation. He was not a mechanic; unwilling to learn a trade, he answered the telephone and took patrons' cars to their doors. He had been in high school for two years and still had two more before he graduated, but he did not intend to finish. He had one ambition — to own a handsome roadster, an ambition which would have paralyzed his father who never aspired to even a horse-drawn delivery wagon.

The room of the elder Kellers was furnished, like Anna Ruth's, with a pine bed, a bureau, and a chair. In the cupboard hung a faded gray gingham dress and a man's worn and heavy suit. Two windows looked out into Duke Street, and toward one walked Anna Ruth. She had seen

nothing in her own room and nothing in Roger's, and here too she was blind.

Across the street, which was unpaved and none too clean, four narrow houses presented an unbroken front. In the uppermost, Mrs. Carson, excessively tidy, excessively homely, and excessively jealous, kept an eye on Carson. He was a handsome little man, especially in his close-fitting letter-carrier's uniform, and his unavoidable visits to other houses worried his wife from morning till night. She had various ways of making him ridiculous; she spread a newspaper under his plate and covered him with an oilcloth bib, and she was frequently seen spying upon him along his route. Silent as Anna Ruth, he was apparently patient under persecution.

Beside Mrs. Carson lived Miss Reilly, who fancied herself pursued by lovers, and who walked through the streets in the evenings, passing the two moving-picture houses and the three hotels twenty times, and looking as though she expected every one to speak to her. A few, deceived by her spotted veil, did speak, but they soon turned away, sometimes laughing cruelly.

Next door Freddy Barrington ordered about a plump, curly-haired little wife and four plump

curly-haired children. He had beady black eyes, large ears, a stiff black mustache, and a turned-down mouth from which stuck perpetually an unlighted cigar. He talked all day and a part of the night upon local and national politics and especially upon the natural inferiority of women. Mrs. Barrington never answered, being too busy washing and ironing in order to support her family.

In Hannah Kress's window hung three hair switches, one black, one gray, one henna-colored, advertising her trade. She was dark and black-browed and immoderately inquisitive, and she yielded to a cruel impulse to print little letters which she sometimes sent by mail and sometimes left on doorsteps or put into open windows. Couched strangely as the messages were, their meaning was always plain to the recipients.

A motion of Hannah's caught and held Anna Ruth's abstracted gaze. Hannah could see Miss Randall coming down the other side of the street on her way to visit old Captain Gross at the corner, who told wonderful stories about men digging their way like rats out of Civil War prisons. Miss Randall was tall, plain of feature, bright of eye, and kind of heart. She strode along in the middle of the hot afternoon, uniformed in

blue, carrying her leather bag as though her strength and energy were inexhaustible.

Having leaned forward to watch Miss Randall, Hannah saw an even more interesting sight. A member of the State constabulary force, erect and slender in his black uniform, walked briskly in the opposite direction, through the block, and out to Darkest Africa where the colored people lived. Instantly Hannah appeared at her door, locked it behind her, and sauntered up the street.

For an instant Anna Ruth's eyes followed her, then her gaze sharpened. From the kitchen three strokes announced that the hour of bliss was at hand. The clock was fast — Keller believed for some mysterious reason that thus economy was served; but though she knew it was fast, Anna Ruth whirled round and, moving like a meteor through space, entered the hall. Up the stairway rose overpowering odors of brown sugar, cheap candy, kerosene, gasoline, burlap, cheap coffee, Bologna sausage, even poorer varieties of tobacco than that which scented Roger's belongings, cabbage whose outer leaves were rotting, bananas which were long past their prime. Unrepelled, since she had been born in this odor and had lived in it all her life, Anna Ruth plunged down.

The little store contained more commodities than odors. Shelves were packed, counters heaped, and on the floor one box or basket stood against another. The broad front shutters were closed, out of respect to Sunday, but a door and window were open at the back for the convenience of customers.

By the window, on a box padded with newspapers, sat Keller reading, thin and stooped and bald, at forty-five. His pale eyes traveled across that section of a newspaper with which he naturally would have least concern, the financial reports. The paper was begged from Miss Dennison and having been read would serve as a wrapper, a necessity regretted when paper might be hoarded and sold for twenty-five cents a hundred pounds. No scrap was wasted; below the cash drawer were three other drawers filled with ancient receipted bills, advertisements, letters announcing the visits of agents, all locked in as though Keller feared some thievish ragman. He spent no unnecessary penny. His teeth were going because he had no money to have them attended to and he suffered tortures from toothache. How could a man with a wife and three children pay money to dentists? The flattening and widening of his mouth under an outstanding

red mustache gave him an expression of unlimited benevolence; no one could doubt that he did his best for his family.

Anna Ruth glanced at him, holding her breath meanwhile. She was his most dependable child, and his sharp 'Anna Ruth! Anna Ruth!' had made demands upon her as soon as she could walk. The closeness of the tie was recognized by Duke Street; Juliet and Roger were called Juliet and Roger, but Anna Ruth was 'Keller's Anna Ruth.' Would he give her some order now and thus confound her? She would have to obey more promptly than ever, if that were possible, because she stood in terror of his decision about her entering high school. She regarded him at once with love and pity and repulsion. She would never look like that! She had a toothbrush which she used with cruel thoroughness upon her mouth and a washcloth which she used with equal thoroughness upon her body. The Keller children were clean; their surroundings acted upon them as a warning and not as an example.

Happily Keller did not look up. He was reading aloud and his foolish words were, 'Kansas City and South, 21½, 21, 20; Smith Tea, 16¼, 15½, 17; Kelly Motor, 19, 20¼, 20½.' Now and then he put out his hand to stroke a homely yellow

cat whose name was Beauty and whose sole claim to tolerance was skill as a mouser. Disliked by all the rest, he was indispensable to Keller; useful and costing nothing he might appropriately serve as the genius of the establishment.

Having passed the den of the lion, Anna Ruth entered the pasture of the lamb. Mrs. Keller sat in the stifling kitchen, asleep over her Bible. Keller believed in nothing so modern as gas for cooking and there was a coal fire in the stove. Mrs. Keller was small, smaller even than Keller, and she walked and looked always as though she were in a desperate hurry. She was in a desperate hurry — to obey Keller's directions and thus to help him bear the burden of herself and three children. The daughter of a country minister, she had never felt at home in town, and there were times when all her family seemed strange to her: her husband who was so different from her lover, Juliet who was so reserved, Roger who was so handsome and so hard to manage, and Anna Ruth who was so eager for learning. She believed that marriage was wrong and that all the shifts and devices of store-keeping were wrong, especially Sabbath-breaking, and that she was lost because she had entered into the one and was afraid to denounce the other. When on

Sunday afternoon she opened her Bible, she was appalled by her wickedness until sleep mercifully dulled her mind and she forgot for a while her deepening terror.

Tiptoeing across the rickety porch, Anna Ruth set foot gingerly upon the broken boardwalk. As she approached the alley the heat reflected from Holland's garage made her gasp. Beyond the garage, and hidden by it and by a tall hedge, was Holland's beautiful lawn with sweeping trees and terraces and pools and a great house like a jewel in a fine setting. Holland and Arthur Wynne's father had been partners in the dry-goods business and had failed, and Wynne's distress for the ruin of helpless people had killed him; but to Holland the failure was apparently the beginning of prosperity. He owned the department store, the hotel, and a large garage, and it was whispered that he paid fines levied upon certain offenders against federal law. The commodity involved was not ordinary home-brew, quaintly hidden in innocent containers, but imported bottled goods carried inviolate and at enormous profit along the Lincoln Highway to the west.

Holland was tall, stout, dark, thick-lipped, soft-handed, curly-headed, smooth-shaven, and

invariably highly scented with heavy perfume. He had three powerful cars and he was constantly buying heavy new furniture and florid pictures. It was supposed that, although he was already married, he would some day buy himself a new wife, Mrs. Wynne, a handsome, blonde woman with wide appealing blue eyes, a selfish, yet beautiful mouth, and long slender hands which curved delicately and greedily. She was wholly conscienceless and vain and cruelly disappointed in life. She had expected that her husband would be rich; instead he had left her reduced to Duke Street and encumbered with a son. She loathed Duke Street and did not even pass the time of day with her neighbors. Sometimes, when Arthur was not about, she went riding with Holland, fancying herself unseen as she slipped down the boardwalk.

Approaching Paradise, otherwise Miss Harriet Dennison's yard, Anna Ruth ran on, through the gate and down the alley to the next gate. In the yard was a tall elm tree, a brick-floored grape arbor, and a mass of flowers, bergamot and golden glow, dahlias and zinnias, all mixed together. Miss Harriet had insanely turned her small parlor into a kitchen and her large kitchen into a sitting-room. She sewed hard all the week,

and on Sunday, in winter before her open fire — another evidence of lunacy — in summer under her arbor, she read and talked. In her sitting-room she had many books and two highly valued pictures, one a print of the Constitution under full sail, the other a photograph of the great nebula in Orion, which she assured her young neighbors was the most beautiful object in the universe. She knew the constellations, spoke familiarly of Aldebaran, Vega, Altair, and Fomalhaut, and was often seen gazing at the heavens from her yard.

At this moment she sat in her arbor, a tall, self-sufficient woman of fifty, black-eyed, gray-haired, with a sharp and eloquent tongue. She had hoped to be a teacher, but she had been compelled to select a profession which required no long training. She had hoped to marry Allan Wynne, but she had seen him not only indifferent to her, but committing the suicidal folly of marrying Mrs. Wynne. She called Mrs. Wynne in her thoughts 'the horse-leech's daughter,' and sometimes 'the Bovary.' In a different circle she would have shone, but she had access to no different circle. Her associates were youthful; adults, embarrassed in her company, took revenge by making fun of her. She despised Roger

Keller, tolerated Juliet, whom she called a poor fish, and liked Anna Ruth. Arthur Wynne she adored as his mother should have adored him. She expected distinction for him; some day, spurning Middlebury, he would astonish the world, and the credit would be in large measure hers.

Hearing a voice, Anna Ruth stopped short. She had not reached the shade of the elm, but she would have been content to stand here forever, drinking in these loved tones. It was not the voice of Miss Harriet, but the voice of Arthur, whom she could see sitting in the arbor. He was tall, with black hair, a wide sensitive mouth, and gray eyes, not deep-set and of steadfast, unchanging color, like Anna Ruth's blue eyes, but large, set far apart, and subject to change like the sea, the eyes of an adventurer or mystic who looks beyond the field of other men's vision. Sometimes his gaze expressed pain and fear, as though he stood on the brink of an abyss into which he was afraid to look. A sophomore in Middlebury's small college and far beyond his age in aspiration and achievement, he had two passions, one for the starry sky, implanted by Miss Harriet, the other for South America, bred by reading and re-reading Prescott's 'Conquest

of Peru.' The two handsomely printed volumes had belonged to his father, and had been marked by him. In one place the word 'caught' was written three times. As a child Arthur wondered what it meant; now he believed he knew. He remembered his father as silent, harassed, always affectionate; Miss Harriet spoke of him as brilliant and scholarly. Mrs. Wynne did not mention him.

Arthur was reading about Peru, not from Prescott, but from a more modern work, borrowed from the State Library.

Beyond the plain, thirty miles away, is a long line of red and gray mountains, their sides bare, their crags pierced by deep gorges, so that they seem full of shadows. Some fifty or sixty miles distant, three gigantic masses close the prospect. That farthest to the south is a long line of precipices, crowned by spires and towers of rock, seventeen thousand feet in height. This is Pichu Pichu. Its faces are too steep for snow, save in the gorges that scar them here and there, but lower down, where the slopes are less abrupt, every gully is white with desert sands blown up by the winds. Next is a huge, purplish black cone, streaked near its top by snow beds, and lower down by lines of red and gray ash and black lava. This is El Misti, a volcano not quite extinct. It stands quite alone, evidently of far more recent origin than the third great mass, its neighbor on the north,

Chachani, rising in three black pinnacles, divided with valleys filled with snow.

Arthur's voice had a vibrant quality and was finely modulated. The quality was his, but Miss Harriet had put the modulations there.

'Read it again,' she had commanded a hundred times. 'Feel what you're saying and make me feel it.'

Consumed with happiness and longing, Anna Ruth stood still. She had heard these passages once before and she had heard Prescott on many Sunday afternoons. She knew little of the environs of Middlebury, neither the farmlands to the south and east, nor the apple country to the north, nor the foothills of the Alleghanies to the west with their noble prospects, their deep woods, their romantic history, but she could have told a great deal about the fortunes of Pizarro. She knew little even of Middlebury itself with its pleasant small-town life, but she could describe Cuzco and the Inca roads and tell the amount of Atahualpa's ransom.

It gave her almost unendurable bliss merely to look at Arthur, herself unseen. Her affection was maternal, she was not too young to know that Mrs. Wynne was a shameful woman and that she cared nothing for her son. If she, Anna

Ruth, could only help him and shelter him and wait upon him! She envied Miss Harriet with a fierce and unchildlike envy, not of Arthur's fondness for her, but because she could help Arthur.

Her adoring contemplation was abruptly terminated by Miss Harriet's sharp command, 'Come and sit down,' and she hurried into the arbor, her irregular and coltish gait made uncertain by emotion. To her surprise, Juliet was here, sitting very still and looking past Holland's bright wall to the yard of the Catholic Church. When a black-clad Sister crossed the open space, her cheeks grew pale, then rosy red, then pale. She had a little pinched face like her mother, wedged between masses of thick brown hair. All her life she had longed for quiet and privacy and neatness and beauty, and in this somber, slow-moving creature she believed she saw them embodied. All her life also, like her mother, she had been afraid, and here, she believed, she saw safety.

To Anna Ruth's deeper amazement, Roger also had taken refuge in this cool spot. He looked round from under his handsome black brows, not with a far-away gaze like Juliet's, but intently and hungrily, the corners of his

selfish mouth firmly set. He could see Holland's garage, and his mind luxuriated in the thought of the powerful cars. Holland seemed like a god; he was rich and fine-looking and did exactly as he pleased. Roger even took a precocious interest in Mrs. Wynne. He turned after a while and looked at Mrs. Wynne's son — Arthur could, he believed, get a lot out of Holland if he were smart enough; probably Holland paid his college bills.

Arthur read on and on. A half-hour passed, then another. Miss Harriet listened, enchanted; Juliet fixed her eyes on the spot from which the Sister had disappeared; Roger watched the garage. Anna Ruth sat motionless and preoccupied, realizing once more that there was a wide world of experience to which she was an outsider. Miss Harriet was inside and so was Arthur and the route to the interior was that of education. She could understand everything Arthur said now, but how dreadful if he should go so far beyond her that she would be in comparison one of the stupid women about whom Miss Harriet talked so eloquently. Suppose her father should not let her go to high school? She had a secret fund earned doing errands and crocheting fine lace for Miss Harriet — it was almost ten

dollars — could she bribe him with that? But how beautiful were Arthur's eyes and mouth, how musical his voice! What unthinkable bliss to see with him Lima and Cuzco and awful Pichu Pichu and El Misti and Chachani! He was still reading about the giant mountains.

The three masses, emblems of solid and unchanging strength in their form, are always changing their aspect. Pichu Pichu with its long gray line of precipices, glows under the western sun in every tint of pink and crimson. Chachani's black pinnacles turn to dark violet, while the snows beneath them redden. In the middle the broad-based cone of El Misti with its lava flows and beds of brown or yellow ash, ranges from glowing orange to purple, deep as if the mountain were all color to the core.

'Why don't you go there?' Roger interrupted ill-naturedly. He stretched out his legs and put his hands into his pockets, and half-lying, half-sitting, looked at Arthur contemptuously.

Startled into consciousness of his surroundings, Arthur closed the book, the spell broken. He looked confusedly at Roger, unseeingly at Juliet, and intently at Anna Ruth. After one had caught Anna Ruth's gaze, it was hard to look away from its earnest friendliness. Seeing him attracted, Miss Harriet was irritated — Arthur

Wynne should not be allowed to exchange deep looks with a Keller!

'He is going there,' she declared sharply. 'Do you know what the Southern Cross is, Roger? Did you ever hear of Alpha or Beta Centauri?'

'No,' laughed Roger. 'I should hope not.'

Seeing Roger's impertinent mouth and Miss Harriet's angry eyes, Anna Ruth shivered. She feared strife; the arguments which Roger had with his father made her flesh creep. Fortunately, she was summoned home by a sharp call which rent the air like tearing muslin. With the departure of his last front tooth, Keller had lost the ability to pronounce *th* and his daughter had become 'Anna Roos.' He called her a dozen times, 'Anna Roos! Anna Roos! Anna Roos!'

Having uttered no word, Anna Ruth leaped up, showing a flash of white leg between stocking and dress. A thousand times she had been summoned thus and a thousand times she had answered by presenting herself instantly. The call continued, 'Anna Roos! Anna Roos! Anna Roos!' It was past four and customers had begun to drop in for the material for a casual Sunday supper, a can of tomatoes, a loaf of bread, a quarter of a pound of Bologna sausage, a few baker's sawdusty cakes. It was no use to call

Juliet; she was no good in the store, and Roger was deliberately disagreeable. Anna Ruth flew through Miss Harriet's yard, out into the flaming alley, up the rickety boardwalk into the kitchen and the store.

At the counter stood Mrs. Carson looking back over her shoulder as though she could watch Carson through the solid shutters. Greed alone kept her on Duke Street.

'Ten cents' worth of Sweitzer and a loaf of bread. You're slow, Anna Ruth.'

Hannah Kress stepped in to ask whether any one knew why the State policeman had gone down the street, and old black Azalea from Darkest Africa came to beg. She bore on her face channels hewed by eighty years, and on her back scars of a beating administered in her girlhood by the Ku-Klux. Keller never gave her anything, not even a cracker or a spoiled banana, but she applied regularly, impelled by a queer senile mischief.

'Please, mister!'

'Nothing doing!' Keller smiled his benevolent, toothless smile. 'The county'll take care of you. I support you when I pay taxes! Next!'

'Lot o' taxes you pays!' mocked Azalea.

Anna Ruth shivered. How dreadful it was to be poor!

At half-past five Mrs. Keller entered to announce supper. Juliet and Roger sat waiting at the table and Anna Ruth and her father joined them. For all their differences in feature and coloring they had the same family look; all were pinched, all were discontented or anxious. Keller and Mrs. Keller were settled and unchangeable, but their children had still a few years in which to break the family pattern.

Mrs. Keller said grace — this moment of all the day was hers. She asked that the Lord bless what was set before them, the weak coffee, the stale bread, the thick slices of cold sausage, the five bananas slightly spoiled. But she did not have the present supply of food in mind, her petition was lifted against future starvation, loneliness, terror, and all other dangers which encompass poor human beings, especially those which are the result of their own inherent depravity.

All the other Kellers prayed also, and all prayed different prayers. Said Keller in his heart, 'O God, bless my business!' Said Roger, 'O God, give me an automobile!' Said Juliet vaguely, 'O God, help me!' Said Anna Ruth with passion, 'O God, bless all these people and Arthur Wynne!'

CHAPTER II

THE STUDENT

THE September sun, rising over the rim of the earth at 5.27 and peering into Anna Ruth's room, met a dull, early-morning gaze. All the Kellers woke slowly and heavily. Except in the warmest midsummer weather the windows were closed, and from a loose joint in the stove in the kitchen seeped a dangerous anæsthetic. The section of pipe leading from the upright to the chimney was short and several times it had slipped out altogether; then Keller stepped on the table and pushed it in. There was always a little odor, and the cat Beauty, who was shut into the house at night, lay close to the door, his teeth bared, ready to leap into the outer air with a snarl. This morning he had begun to whine at four o'clock.

Anna Ruth rose trembling. She was not alarmed by a slight nausea — that she felt every morning; she was terrified lest she should not be allowed to go to high school. She had not broached the subject for a month, but this morning it would have to be broached.

Opening the window, she looked out. The

morning air was cool, the sky bright; the stage of the universe seemed set for important beginnings. A frosting of dew covered the Joseph's coat on the roof, and somehow smothered the odors from the yard. What a happy world it might be if one could have one's way in it!

The question of clothes was troublesome, but not new; the red woolen dress felt warm for September, but the green gingham was impossible; it bore patches of white and was too short to be decent. One could not go to high school looking like a beggar. But she must put on the green dress now; and change before school.

Plunging down the steps, she found the store open. Beauty had departed with an angry and graceful leap and the fresh air had begun to make a little headway against the fœtor within. In the kitchen, Keller stood on a chair, pushing in the stovepipe, with Mrs. Keller watching him. Erect, she looked even more frail than when she sat. She had tied her gingham apron with cruel tightness; only thus would it stay on her little body. Her eyes were dull; depression sat on her more heavily than usual. Anna Ruth looked at her with the vague anxiety of inexperience, but said nothing; the Kellers did not greet each other with cheerful 'good-mornings.'

Before Keller was ready to step down, the store door slammed, and Anna Ruth flew to wait on Thomas Claxton, who, sleepy and forlorn and having worked all night, stopped now to buy his breakfast, his wife being a poor housekeeper. Upon his heels came Caleb Gangeware, of the sect of the Holy Rollers, who knelt and prayed for Anna Ruth, then Hannah Kress to see who was up early. Anna Ruth waited upon them busily, her heart thumping, her spirits now up, now down. If she could not go to school, she would be cut off forever from Arthur.

Juliet descended languidly. Life in her father's house seemed most nearly intolerable in the early morning and the quiet and peace of the Sisters most lovely. She went about like one in a dream, her little face pale between her masses of dark hair, putting the chairs to the table and helping her mother serve the meager breakfast. Roger did not appear; no one could make him get up till he was ready. They ate hurriedly, Keller and Anna Ruth running back and forth to the store. Keller's business was large, even though individual purchases and profits were small.

At half-past seven Anna Ruth went upstairs. She made the beds and washed her face and hands and brushed her short hair flat, then she

slipped into the red woolen dress, which quenched all the brightness of her look. To her the dress was precious because it had belonged to Juliet. Her heart in her mouth, she crept downstairs to present herself to her lord.

Dumbfounded, Keller stared, his mouth open, both hands clutching a tin measure in which he was about to bring kerosene from the cellar.

'Anna Roos!' he gasped.

'What, Father?' Anna Ruth held her ground boldly.

'Why are you wearing your best dress?'

'I'm going to high school.'

'To high school! Humbug!'

Anna Ruth advanced, clasping her hands.

'Oh, yes, Father! Please, Father!'

'I have one in school. You're needed here.'

Turning on his heel, he approached the cellar steps and descended, Anna Ruth following to the brink.

'I'm not needed during school hours, Father. I'll work harder before and after, that's when we're busy. And Juliet will help, I know she will.'

'It costs too much,' shouted Keller from the bowels of the earth. He had no lamp or candle and needed none.

'It won't cost anything. I'll wear the same dress all year.' She was about to confess, 'I have some money. I earned it crocheting. I can crochet in recess and in the evenings when my lessons are done and I can earn more.' But she had a hope beyond high school and then the crisis might be more serious than now. 'Please, Father!'

'No,' said Keller.

Anna Ruth clutched the counter, her knees shaking. She would die if she could not go to high school. An education she must have. She saw Arthur's clear eyes and heard his clear voice and thought with acute jealousy of Miss Harriet. With an argument saved for the moment of desperation, she barred her father's way, backing from the vessel of kerosene carried before his breast like a shield. Keller was amazed; Juliet's silence and reserve had an insolent quality and Roger was entirely indifferent to his will, but Anna Ruth always obeyed like a lamb.

'I can earn a great deal more, Father, believe me. There are girls that have graduated that get fifty dollars a month. Think of that! Whatever you spend I can pay back. I can get a good position and I can work here besides.'

Still Keller advanced, still Anna Ruth receded.

Fifty dollars a month! — the sound was arresting. If he kept her at home, he would have to support her all the same and then he would not be paid back. It was as she said, she would be at home during all the busy hours. He changed his mind promptly.

'Get out,' he ordered. 'No fooling round after school, remember. Be here on the dot.'

Anna Ruth seized the counter in a joyful clutch. What relief! What happiness!

'I'll always work till half-past eight,' she promised. 'And I'll always hurry home and I'll always be here on Saturdays.' If the kerosene had not interfered, she might have yielded to an insane impulse to hug the little man.

Reeling under deliverance from long suspense, she went down the street. Hannah Kress leaned from her window to watch, and, after she was out of sight printed a little note, addressed to Keller and containing two sentences. 'Why don't you buy Anna Ruth a decent dress? Why don't you give your family enough to eat?' Hannah always thought the worst of every one and she believed that Keller was a miser.

Anna Ruth went on briskly. At the corner she imparted the joyful news to Captain Gross, sitting at his window in his wheeled chair. A

few steps farther she met tall, bearded Mr. Line, the undertaker, who lived opposite Captain Gross and who looked like an emaciated Santa Claus, and to him also she announced her destination. Line served only the very poor; he buried the dead of Duke Street and a similar region to the north, and of Darkest Africa, and also of the County Home. He looked at Anna Ruth curiously, as though he saw an unnatural bloom on a familiar bush.

'That's right, Annie Ruth,' he said encouragingly. 'You keep it up.' When Anna Ruth had sped on her way, he added to himself, 'If you can.'

Anna Ruth had a vague hope that on this wonderful morning Roger might walk with her; indeed, that he might escort her as a newcomer to the door of the high school; but Roger was clearly not going to start until the last minute. She forgave him as soon as she reproached him and repeated a favorite formula, thus building a wall round herself.

'I have my father and my mother and Roger and Juliet and Miss Harriet and Arthur.'

She entered the high school boldly. The building was inadequate in size and equipment, the scholars sat two in a seat where there should have been but one, typewriters for the Com-

mercial Course crowded the dark corridors, but to Anna Ruth it was as beautiful as the halls of Athens. She had stood at the head of her class in the eighth grade and they would have her marks here and know that she was a person of mind. The vague smell of chalk and the stronger smell of disinfectants thrilled her; here in the abode of learning was the home of her soul. When she saw her former companions pointing her out to new acquaintances, she thought innocently that they were praising her scholarship. The pretty, handsomely dressed teachers, she believed, looked at her with interest and she looked back at them adoringly. Love was the breath of life and here were more persons to love.

She went from room to room gathering new textbooks — fortunately books were donated by the town. Latin — Arthur knew Latin as he knew English. English — now she would learn to speak with the elegance of Miss Harriet. Bookkeeping — she chose that for her father's sake. History and Physical Geography — ah! Cuzco, Lima, Arequipa, El Misti, Pichu Pichu! She was never in all her life to have a happier day.

At recess May Hurd joined her. May was dark and robust; her stiff curly hair stood out

round her head as though it were starched; her lips were scarlet. Anna Ruth thought her beautiful and was proud of her notice; she did not suspect that it was not she whom May noticed.

'Where's your brother, Anna Ruth?'

Anna Ruth was troubled. Her eyes had continued to look for Roger in vain.

'I'm afraid he's sick.'

'Perhaps he's going to stop school.'

'Oh, no!' That was unthinkable.

May looked at her critically as though she were weighing something in her mind. She spoke carelessly, but with a flushed cheek.

'Would you like to go to church with me on Sunday evening?'

'Oh, yes!' Anna Ruth was astounded.

'All right, I'll come for you.'

Except for anxiety about Roger, Anna Ruth's morning was a triumph and on the way home her anxiety was relieved; she found Roger sauntering beside her, his hands in his pockets.

'I didn't see you at Assembly.'

'I was excused,' he explained. 'I had to get the books out, smarty.'

'Oh!' said Anna Ruth, too proud to keep a straight path.

A whole morning and afternoon of happiness were too much for Anna Ruth's head. At half-past four, hurrying in the narrow tunnel by the side of the house, she met Azalea, tottering on her cane. Her lot — how exalted; Azalea's — how lowly! Of her precious store, banked with Miss Harriet, she liked to carry a little, and she had three nickels in her pocket. She did not see that Keller was standing beyond the inner opening of the tunnel and she could not dream how much Azalea irritated and terrified him, nor guess that he had only a few minutes before received an anonymous communication cruelly and unwarrantably assuming that he was a man of means. She held out to Azalea one of the nickels. Her gesture was queenly, she was Saint Elizabeth, Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller.

'There, Azalea!'

But the gift did not reach Azalea's grasp, though she had already touched it with the tip of her finger; a hand was thrust between them and the nickel was confiscated. Azalea departed; she was not so blind that she could not see Anna Ruth's face, nor so cruel that she did not pity her. She moderated her witchlike grin, and forbore to utter her witchlike chuckle.

Anna Ruth took three steps forward and found herself in the bright light of the yard. Keller's soft mouth trembled, his mustache bristled visibly as he waited, an outraged deity.

'I got the nickel from Miss Harriet.' Anna Ruth held her breath; the moment was one of greatest danger.

'I'm poor,' declared Keller. 'I have a large family. And you throw money away!'

'It was only a nickel.' Anna Ruth's fright changed to terror.

'A nickel! A nickel is the interest on a dollar! You want me to support you while you go to school and yet you throw money away!'

Anna Ruth saw disaster sweeping upon her in a flood. But, inquiring about the truth of her wild statement that school girls earned fifty dollars a month, Keller had discovered that one graduate of last spring was earning sixty.

'Be warned,' he said and let her pass. 'Remember, no fancy dressing when you graduate, and no automobile to ride in, and no bouquets.'

Peril behind her, customers gone, lessons learned, Anna Ruth walked out in the evening for a breath of air. Her mother sat drowsily in the kitchen, Roger was absent, Juliet had gone

to her room. In the store, hot and odorous in the warm night, Freddy Barrington held forth upon his darling subject. Anna Ruth had a fantastic notion that his large ears wagged.

'There's something, Keller, there's something. You can't tell exactly what it is.' He had to-day found a precious item in a newspaper. 'Never a first-class poet, Keller, never a first-class artist or musician. They can't do any better than Chamnady, and as for Bethovin — show me one. Name one, Keller, name one.'

Chewing a broomstraw, Keller named none. He liked tobacco and sometimes he was almost sick for it, but he never touched it; a poor man could allow himself no luxuries. He answered as he always answered, with remarks upon his own favorite subject. No captain of finance could have been more impressive. It was an admirable conversational arrangement, this between Barrington and Keller.

'Smith Tea has gone up and Kelly Motor down. That's what I knew would happen.'

Outside, Anna Ruth glanced toward the left, toward the houses of Miss Harriet and Mrs. Wynne and Mr. Line, then turned toward the right and walked to the end of the block. Where the abodes of the white race bordered upon

Darkest Africa, she paused and looked about. There were queer people here, queer even to Anna Ruth. In a house set far back lived old Dr. Snaith, once the owner of all the land roundabout. He was seldom seen, and opinion was divided as to whether he was really crazy or only pretended to be.

In little cabins on his lot lived Jimmie Kane, who was white, but looked black because he never washed, and old Azalea. Anna Ruth could hear Azalea muttering and somewhere out of sight Caleb Gangeware praying, and across the street poor black Burling Crane singing, 'There's a long, long trail a-winding.' He had been gassed in France and he steadily approached an acute form of his mania. In the next block the colored people were holding prayer-meeting, and when Burling was quiet their music could be heard, wild and sweet in the still night.

It was not Dr. Snaith's house or Azalea's which Anna Ruth came out to see; it was not a glimpse of Caleb she hoped for. She sauntered back, her heart throbbing. Her heart often seemed too large for her body, now it filled the whole cavity of her chest.

From Mrs. Wynne's house a rosy light shone through drawn silk curtains. The observant

residents of Duke Street could hear nothing suspicious and could catch only disarming glimpses of Mrs. Wynne sitting as though she were waiting, but Hannah Kress was certain that when the shades were lowered Arthur was away, and Mr. Holland slipped across the alley from his palace.

Though Anna Ruth hoped to meet Arthur she was terrified when she heard his voice.

'That you, Anna Ruth?'

She hastened to explain her presence. Her voice trembled, but the words came easily.

'I finished my lessons and I'm taking a walk. I'm on my way home.'

'What are you studying?'

Here was a magnificent climax to the day!

'Latin, History, English' — she rolled them off glibly.

'You like to study?'

'Better than anything in the world.'

He walked beside her, past Mr. Line's, past his mother's, and in the rosy light they looked shyly at each other. Anna Ruth saw eyes filled with sudden misery; Arthur saw a low brow, a blue gaze as steadfast as honor itself. Having begun by feeling pity for the tribe of Keller, he had discerned that for this member of the

family the tragedy of ignorance and poverty was greater than for the others.

'If you come across any puzzling questions, perhaps I can help you.'

They had passed into the darkness and Anna Ruth's dazzling smile was lost.

'Oh, thank you!' she cried with a little stammer.

Moved by the ardent sound, Arthur reached out and laid his hand on her arm. His grasp closing round her slender wrist held her motionless, one foot advanced for the next step. He had affection and sympathy from Miss Harriet, but Miss Harriet was fifty, she was old. Here were young eyes like his — would they see what he saw, or would they, like most young eyes, turn away laughing?

'Look up, Anna Ruth!' he commanded.

Anna Ruth obeyed. Overhead in the brilliant September sky shone Vega, blue-white, like a diamond of clearest water.

'There's the Dipper — you know that, Anna Ruth?'

'Yes.'

'See the two stars in the bowl, they point to the North Star. Did you know that?'

'No,' said Anna Ruth.

'And the handle points to Arcturus. Arcturus is five hundred times brighter than the sun; did you know that, Anna Ruth?'

'No!' said Anna Ruth with passion. 'I know nothing.'

Arthur laughed deeply, and as though he laughed seldom and laughing hurt.

'You know something now, for I've told you. Thrilling, isn't it? It carries you out of yourself. All you want to be after you die is a mind, so you can understand. Think of the suns and stars and nebulæ and comets, all flying through space.'

'Yes,' said Anna Ruth. Oh, that they might walk on and on, to Pittsburgh, to the Mississippi, to the stars themselves!

'Wouldn't you like to shed your body and fly about with them?'

'Yes.' But Anna Ruth would not have exchanged for any bodiless state this present with Arthur's warm hand on her own. She could not hold her strained position, and her motion broke the spell. Arthur took his hand away and they walked on, self-consciously, unobserved except by safe and silent little Carson, standing at his window listening to an oration from behind. When they reached the store and the light shone

upon them, he gazed at them with profound interest.

'Good-night,' said Arthur.

Anna Ruth raised her eyes; in a glance she gave herself to him, admiring, adoring. Arthur felt only his own startled, thrilled confusion, as though he gazed on new worlds. They stood a long moment, dumb, the blood warming their hearts, their bodies growing cold.

'Good-night,' said Arthur again.

'Good-night,' answered Anna Ruth.

Having paused breathless inside the tunnel for five minutes, Anna Ruth ran into the kitchen. Her father was in the store, her mother sat reading the Bible. Contrary as it was to Keller custom, she threw her arms round her mother's neck and kissed her fervently without knowing that she was kissing Arthur Wynne. She realized how tiny her mother was, but not how lifeless. Hard work, confinement, monotony had dried the sap of her life when she was still young.

'Good-night, Mother.'

'Good-night, Anna Ruth.' Mrs. Keller blushed as though she had been embraced by a stranger.

Anna Ruth lay wakeful on her pillow. What a day! What a happy, happy day! In the middle

of the night she was wakened by a vague feeling of uneasiness and she rose and opened her window, then, returning, slept the sound sleep of youth, breathing fresh air for once. A gale blew through the house, fortunately for all the sleepers.

CHAPTER III

TWO IS COMPANY

ANNA RUTH was perfectly happy. It was Sunday evening in January and she was going with May Hurd to church. Though she had seldom had a meal which satisfied her young appetite, though her unbecoming red dress was growing ragged and there was no prospect of another, though her mother had become more silent and depressed, though Juliet and Roger both seemed unhappy, and though Keller raged under tortures from toothache, the autumn had passed with the rapidity of a dream.

She helped her mother, slaved for Keller, covered Juliet's and Roger's absences, and still had room in her heart for her own emotions. All the subjects which she studied were delectable, and now best of all was algebra because it led to higher branches of mathematics which Arthur told her were necessary for astronomers. She adored the activity of school; she did not mind the bad air — the air at home was far worse, especially at night when in the tightly closed house the odors from the store floated upward.

The loose pipe was forgotten; under Keller's last strong shove it stayed so long in place that no one remembered it had slipped out. The teachers were still gods and goddesses; she hung upon their words with the respect which is one of the happiest sentiments of youth.

Best of all, she saw Arthur Wynne daily. He started to college in the morning at the same hour that she started to high school, or, to speak correctly, she started to high school at the same hour that he started to college. He questioned her about her studies and she was able to answer freely, as by some magic she was able to answer her teachers. Happiness untied the knots in her tongue. Arthur had grown taller, his voice was deeper, and his smile more beautiful. He was allowed to use the telescope at the college as much as he pleased, and he no longer dreamed of going to Ecuador or Peru to mine silver; he wished to take longer journeys through a giant lens. He was intensely happy when Anna Ruth stepped along beside him, and he looked down earnestly, studying her. When he talked about the stars, he watched her sharply, dreading indifference or inattention. He was an adventurer on the earth and in the stellar universe, but not in love; having selected a world to abide in and

finding it closed, he would seek no other. He had many reasons for being shy and humble and acutely sensitive.

Going to church with May had become a regular custom. It was thrilling to be invited and to be called for, thrilling to walk through the streets with so handsome a creature, thrilling to sit beside her, close to the soft material of her fine coat with its fur cuffs and collar, thrilling to smell the lilac perfume with which she saturated her handkerchief and her clothes. There was about her an odor of disinfectants, inseparable from one who lived in the jail, but the odor of lilac was stronger.

The church was a delight to the eye. A benevolent woman had given a free hand to an architect of genius, and the building was far more beautiful than those who worshiped there suspected. The ceiling had a lofty and noble arch, the windows, leaded in delicate patterns were lightly frosted and not stained, and all the color was in altar cloths, gilded pipes, and a rich red carpet. The organist had talent, the choir ability, and the minister spoke in a quiet musical voice.

Anna Ruth was not a member of this church or any other. The pious in Middlebury left the indifferent in peace, and church to her had small

relation to conduct. There was little in this minister's discourse to connect the two. Church-going was a pleasant experience, and that was all; she sat lapped in comfort, enjoying the warmth and beauty, sensuously pleased by May's perfume, but not always listening.

Another source of happiness was Roger's company on the way home. He might be cross about getting up in the morning — he had left school and now drove a delivery truck for Holland's department store; but on these strolls he was always amiable. The business which had grown out of the ruin of Holland and Wynne continued to prosper. Holland had been divorced quietly, and it was said that Mrs. Holland asked a great deal of money to go quietly.

Roger had recently had an interesting experience — Holland not only noticed him and spoke to him, but sent him on a special mission. He came into the garage as on a casual errand, carrying a light parcel and exhaling health and self-confidence, and pride and the odor of expensive soap.

'I promised Brigham, the store-keeper at Elliston, that he should have this to-day. Take it down and say nothing to any one about having been there.'

In the afternoon, when the simple errand had been done, Holland's chauffeur asked Roger what business he had at Elliston. Appleby had every opportunity to know Roger; from Holland's private garage he had long seen him go in and out. Sometimes before entering the paternal gate he threw away a cigarette and sometimes he stopped, sheltered by the fence, and changed his bright tie for a dingy one.

'I wasn't at Elliston,' Roger answered promptly.

'I saw you there.'

Roger looked Appleby in the eye, believing, romantically, and as it happened, correctly, that he was being tested. He was at once firm and impudent.

'You're mistaken. Or else you're lying.'

He was certain that he was right when Appleby merely turned away laughing. He believed happily that Holland recognized his ability; he did not guess that what Holland recognized was his weakness.

Round and round the town walked May and Roger and Anna Ruth on quiet Sunday evenings. There were beautiful trees on the broad residence streets beyond Mr. Holland's, and the college campus was like a dim grove. In this neighbor-

hood lived Judge Severn and the rich Ripleys, and Mr. Galbreath, who had inherited a fortune from a coal-mining grandfather, and Mr. Yates, who owned the furniture factory, none of whom Anna Ruth knew even by name. She heard dimly and uncritically the badinage of her companions which was not at all like the conversation of Arthur Wynne. Each said, 'You don't say!' and, 'Ain't it the truth!' fifty times, and sometimes they nudged and shoved each other. May was the aggressor in these encounters; there was hunger in her eyes when they rested on Roger, which was not in Roger's when he looked at her.

Anna Ruth followed her own delicious trains of thought. To-morrow's lessons were always learned and she reviewed them mentally. She thought of her admirable teachers, of Miss Harriet, of friendly Miss Randall, and most of all of Arthur. Sometimes she saw a dim light in the dome of the observatory and wished that the others would stop so that she could look and look. A bolder girl would have persuaded her brother to rap on the door.

This bright Sunday evening she had no definite appointment with May, but, taking for granted that May expected her, she decided that contrary to custom she would call at the jail.

She smoothed down her short hair and pulled her hat over her ears before the little mirror in the kitchen. Mrs. Keller sat by the table in a clean dress, her Bible beside her, and Keller sat in the store, occupied with his foolish reports. Juliet and Roger had vanished. Juliet's 'to church' meant to the Catholic Church, from which she returned either exalted or depressed, quickly to seek her room and solitude. Roger did not explain where he was going.

Anna Ruth breathed the fresh air with delight, gazing meanwhile at Arthur's stars which twinkled, innumerable, immeasurably distant, yet friendly. Duke Street was dark, except the rosy glow from Mrs. Wynne's pretty lamps. Even the sound of Anna Ruth's light step was sufficient to draw Hannah Kress from her window to her door. Anna Ruth was small game; the Kellers were all small game; they had no money to envy, and no scandals to interest. But when she saw that Anna Ruth paused opposite the Wynne house, Hannah sauntered down the street. What did Anna Ruth see? Though she herself was not game, she might serve as a pointer. Anna Ruth lingered but an instant, leaving her place for Hannah who flattened herself against the square's only tree, a tall

linden, the single survivor of a row. When Hannah was excited, she had a fashion of blowing out her cheeks; now blowing them out and sucking them in, she stood still for a long time.

The jail was a gray building on a dark street. The front pretended to be merely that of an ordinary double house with thick shrubbery on each side, but, back of the shrubbery, dingy walls extended like long cruel arms ready to clutch. Nothing could disguise its sorrowful character; even when it was freshly painted it looked repelling. Anna Ruth was at once repelled and awed.

She gave the bell a strong pull as though nothing here could be expected to yield easily and the knob almost came off in her hand and caused a terrific jangling within. May's mother came hurrying to the door, an Amazon with a sharp gaze, a soft voice, and an insatiable curiosity about wickedness. The imperious ring led her to expect the arrival of a guard with at least one criminal, possibly a murderer, and she was keenly disappointed when she saw the youthful and long-legged figure.

'Well?' she asked sharply.

'Is May here?' Anna Ruth felt immediate misgivings.

'Yes.' Mrs. Hurd blocked the doorway, as though to hide something within, or to prevent the prisoners from rushing out. 'She's here. What do you want with her?'

'I — we go to church together on Sunday evenings,' stammered Anna Ruth, remembering uneasily that May had made no engagement.

'You what?' Mrs. Hurd came outside and closed the door.

'We go to church together on Sunday evenings.'

'What's your name?'

'Anna Ruth.' Anna Ruth spoke as though she were ten years old.

'Anna Ruth what?'

'Anna Ruth Keller.'

Mrs. Hurd meditated for an instant, then she opened the door, letting out the odor of disinfectants in an overpowering wave.

'May!'

'Yes.'

'There's a girl here to go to church with you. Keller's her name.'

'Tell her' — there was a pause — 'tell her I have a previous engagement.'

'Does she mean she can't go?' faltered Anna Ruth.

'That's what she means.'

When, without seeming to move, Mrs. Hurd closed the door, herself inside, Anna Ruth did not understand that she had been treated rudely; she blamed herself for committing an impropriety. It was no wonder that Mrs. Hurd looked at her amazed, a young girl appearing alone at the jail door at night. Church seemed a place where she could recover self-respect, and she walked slowly thither, and entering timidly sat in the pew near the back to which May always led her. Roger sat behind them and waited for them outside the door. Entering with May, she had felt proud and self-confident; now she wished herself away. She was frightened; this was not her world. She was right in believing that two girls in a neighboring pew giggled softly. Her hat was battered, her coat left long spaces of arm and leg exposed.

When the music began above and behind her and faint and far away, tears came into her eyes and she pressed the lids tight. The music quickened her pain. Her friend had hurt her. May might at least have spoken to her; it was dreadful to have a door closed in one's face! The music rose and fell, and gradually her tears dried and she felt comforted. But she had not reached

the depth to which she was to fall. The hymn board said Number 428, and she took a hymnal from the rack and found the place. Then, looking up, she suffered an insult which she could not fail to recognize. Boldly down the aisle together walked May and Roger. It was a blow to her pride in herself, though she had not known that she had pride in herself, and a heavier blow to her pride in Roger of which she had been aware. She was so startled that she jumped visibly and the silly girls laughed.

May did not care for her; she admired Roger and that was why she pretended to be friendly, and she wanted him to herself; that was the reason she made no appointment. While his sister waited at the door, Roger sat in the parlor of the jail. They had tricked her and she sat tricked and visible to all. They were ashamed of her; relieved of her company they selected a front seat. They must have seen her as they came down the aisle, yet they passed her by. How handsome they looked, May in her thick coat with the fur, Roger in a new suit! All Roger's boyish awkwardness had vanished; he looked twenty rather than seventeen.

The singing and the preaching calmed her first anguish. She did not listen to the sermon,

but the preacher's soothing voice relieved her of the necessity for thinking. When she started to go out, she staggered and caught the jamb of the door. She had grown five years in an hour, and growing pains are hard to bear. She walked slowly along until she came to the familiar turn into Duke Street. She must go home; to her own room, and lay her head on her pillow.

Under the linden tree opposite Mrs. Wynne's house she stood still. She could not tell Arthur what had befallen her — there was nobody in the world whom she could tell, but she could find comfort in his society. She still had her father and mother and her sister and Miss Harriet and Arthur; though Roger was gone and so was May. If she could only find Arthur! The curtains were parted; Hannah Kress, peering in, had seen Mrs. Wynne sitting like a woman in a show window.

A sharper pang tore her heart. The wind was rising and the blast seemed to blow through her body and, showing how thin it was, show also her insignificance. May did not care for her, Roger treated her with indifference, how should Arthur tolerate her? Hearing a step, she steadied herself against the tree. It was like Arthur's step, but it was unnaturally slow. She turned her

head — it was Arthur. The stars were hidden; probably he came home from the observatory because the night was growing cloudy. She longed to cross the street and speak to him, but she resisted temptation, knowing that she would burst into tears.

Arthur walked slowly, his head bent. He stumbled as he went up the steps, and caught the doorknob, then drew back as though it were charged with electricity. He removed a twisted paper, regarded it stupidly, then thrust it into his pocket and went indoors. On the twisted sheet, Hannah Kress advised him to prepare for his mother's marriage. She wondered also whether he knew that he had been 'living off of' Holland. The possibility of his ignorance occurred to Hannah as she waited under the tree.

Anna Ruth shivered; the wind blew colder and the sky was black and again she was shut out. She moved so she could see into the room. Surely Arthur would join Mrs. Wynne! But he did not appear, he must have gone straight up the stairs. Was he not on speaking terms with his mother? Mr. Wynne had somehow been worried to death by Holland — that persistent conviction of all Middlebury had reached even Anna Ruth, and now it was said that Mrs.

Wynne was to marry Holland. It was not right, and it was a worse misery than May Hurd's unkindness and deceit.

Through the kitchen, warm and dark and odorous, Anna Ruth passed into the store where Keller sat on his padded box.

'Has Mother gone to bed?'

'Yes.'

'And Juliet?'

'I guess so. When will you be through with your High School, Anna Roos?'

High School! She would have to see May Hurd daily.

'Three years from June.'

'It's long enough,' said Keller crossly.

Anna Ruth crept up the steps. She had already forgiven Roger, he had been bewitched and could not help himself; it was possible that he did not know that she waited outside the jail door. But May she could never forgive; May had cut the cord of her only childish friendship.

CHAPTER IV

THE SERENADE

THE sun woke Anna Ruth at half-past four on Saturday morning and she rose dizzily. Summer had followed winter with little intermediate spring, and the heat at that hour on a June morning seemed uncanny. The painted roof reflected heat as a mirror reflects light; from the yard rose a midsummer stench; beyond was the reflecting wall of Holland's garage.

Anna Ruth was tired; it was well that school was over and that for the next three months she would have only five or six kinds of work. She had finished as she began, near the head of her class, but her satisfaction had been spoiled by the reviving fear that she would not be allowed to return. It was supposed that Juliet, who for the summer was waiting in a restaurant, would in September take her old place as general helper in household and store, but one could not be sure. Juliet hated the restaurant; she went white-faced and silent in the morning and returned white-faced and silent in the evening, to go directly to her room. Sometimes she looked

at her family as though they, as well as the store and Duke Street, were hideous. She handed her wages to her father, and it might easily be that a present good would seem more desirable to Keller than the prospect of Anna Ruth's being able to earn high wages after a few years.

Roger made a stormy scene when his father demanded his wages and promptly took up his abode elsewhere. He was well paid and the clothes in which he went to church on Sunday evenings were as elegant as May's. Anna Ruth went to church no more. If she had seen the look of ardor which May bestowed upon Roger and the careless glance he gave in return, she might have forgiven May. Many girls smiled upon Roger.

Miss Harriet still sat and sewed and uttered wise sayings; Hannah Kress watched the world of Duke Street from her window or her door; Mrs. Wynne posed by her rosy lamps. She was still Mrs. Wynne, and Duke Street was balked of the celebration it had planned. Arthur spent his days and all the clear nights at the college, facing Duke Street on his way to and fro with his head in air. His hours for coming and going changed and he no longer walked with Anna Ruth to the corner. Anna Ruth waited hopefully; she was

young, time seemed eternal, and at present she asked only that she might follow Arthur in learning. By watching she might have caught him at Miss Harriet's, but she had grown self-conscious and she feared betraying her secret.

The day not only promised to be uncomfortable physically, but it began with an unhappy incident. Breakfast was over at six o'clock and Anna Ruth was waiting on customers when the youngest of the Barringtons came into the store. She had a single penny with which to buy candy and she stood a long time before the show-case contemplating the indigestible and dingy contents. Suddenly loosening her hand in her delight she let go the penny, which slipped down among the decayed cabbage leaves gathered in a deep basket. At once she burst into loud crying. To a Barrington the possession of a penny was notable.

Keller jumped; other teeth were taking their departure and his suffering was intolerable.

'What ails her?'

'I lost a penny,' sobbed the little creature.

'Where?'

'In this basket.'

'Hunt it, Anna Roos,' commanded Keller.

For the first time in her fifteen years Anna Ruth felt a rebellious spirit. The air was hot and she was tired and the odor from the leaves was foul. Why not give the child a penny's worth of candy and let her go? Surely they could be generous to this extent!

'Hurry!' ordered Keller. 'There are customers waiting.'

Anna Ruth lifted out the leaves, shook them, and laid them in another basket, her cheeks crimson with shame. The child sobbed brokenheartedly as the bottom came into view.

'Here it is!' cried Anna Ruth at last.

'You're sure?' asked Keller, sharply.

Anna Ruth held it up; she knew he had never trusted her common sense since he had caught her giving a nickel to Azalea. She felt a sudden contempt, then with fierce self-reproach a sharp pity. It was for her that he saved, so that she might have a roof over her head and food to eat. How dreadful it was to be poor!

The temperature rose higher and the shrill voices of children playing in the street tortured the ear. Anna Ruth grew more uneasy, her knees pained and the muscles of her arms ached. Certain commodities had to be carried to the cellar if they were to be preserved and she went up and

down the dark stairway. Keller grew more impatient; he had not slept for three nights and now he could not eat.

Early in the afternoon a hot wind began to blow, whirling the loose papers and carrying a cloud of dust into the store. The wind seemed to come from nowhere and not a cloud stained the blue sky. The air grew warmer and more stifling; even Beauty, who was normally indifferent to changes of temperature, prowled restlessly. Mrs. Keller was frightened; she sat down for a little while in the middle of the afternoon, holding her Bible against her breast. The wind sucked her breath and she had a strange anxiety lest she might die and have only a gingham dress to be buried in.

Hannah Kress was at the window. When she sat waiting she moistened her lips with her tongue and swallowed as though she were thirsty. Above her head dangled the three switches. The arrangement of her own hair which hung over her forehead was not an advertisement of her skill. She was expectant of some catastrophe, or at least of some interesting event, but she waited for hours and saw nothing out of the ordinary. The children annoyed her with their screaming. Caleb Gangeware knelt

and prayed, poor Burling Crane wandered up and down, and now and then he groaned.

At three o'clock a cloud rose behind Mr. Holland's garage, only to disappear; at four there was the brief and distant murmur of thunder. Anna Ruth calculated there were still three and a half hours of heat and light to be endured before the sun would set. Surely the night would be cooler!

Anna Ruth tried to control her nerves. Her father and mother were here — they were safe. She wished that Juliet would come home. And Roger — but she did not dare to let herself think of Roger, who had abandoned them, who was earning so much, and not only letting his father work hard, but was paying his own earnings to a boarding-house keeper. Sometimes in wakeful hours at night, the slow tears stole down Anna Ruth's cheeks.

The sun set, but at eight o'clock when Juliet came home and climbed to her furnace, it was still hot. Anna Ruth was sure that she should never sleep. Now her father and mother and Juliet were safe, but where was Arthur Wynne? She felt acutely anxious, as a mother might feel about her child, and she slipped out the kitchen door and went through the tunnel and down the

street. The children still played, their parents sat on their doorsteps, Hannah looked up and down, and Burling Crane walked up and down. Far away at the other end of the block there was a sudden excited shout of laughter and Burling and Hannah hurried in that direction.

Anna Ruth found the Wynne house dark, and wearing an abandoned look, as though every one had gone away, not to-day, but yesterday or the day before. In panic, she forgot her shyness and pride and determined to set out to Miss Harriet's — if Arthur were not there she might at least hear some mention of him. She reëntered the tunnel, went down the boardwalk and stepped into the alley. The night was entirely dark except for pale flashes of lightning. In Holland's garage, Appleby seemed to be turning on the power of a large car, then turning it off, then on. She stepped carefully down the alley and into Miss Harriet's yard. As she went she heard a strange sound.

She believed for an instant that it was some uncanny manifestation of the coming storm, then she knew that it was a human being crying. The sound came from Miss Harriet's little house; the voice, tortured and hysterical though it was, was familiar. She took another step and felt the

brick floor of the arbor, then two more steps and peered into the low window.

Miss Harriet sat in her sewing-chair, on the floor beside her a tumbled heap of the delicate material which she usually handled so carefully. Beside her sat Arthur, and it was from his tortured throat that the dreadful sounds burst so uncontrollably. His shoulders heaved, he produced sometimes a little whining. Suddenly he stood up and Miss Harriet rose with him. Physically, Anna Ruth was all eyes, mentally all curiosity and astonishment and concern and torturing jealousy.

'Courage, my dear!' she heard Miss Harriet say. 'Courage!'

This challenge could not, it seemed, altogether sustain Arthur. He dropped into a chair and bent his forehead to the table.

'I'm going away,' said he, choking.

'Yes,' answered Miss Harriet, questioningly but approvingly, as though going away were by all means what she would advise.

'To-night,' said Arthur. 'Now.'

'Have you money?' Oh, enviable Miss Harriet!

'Yes,' he answered. 'I earned money tutoring. I've supported myself and I've saved some.'

'I can help you. You'll promise to ask if you need anything?'

'If I must,' said Arthur. 'But I think I can get along.'

He rose again and stood looking down at Miss Harriet, his mouth trembling. Anna Ruth clasped her hands — if she could only speak one word to him in comfort, if she could only know what his trouble was, if she could only have one look for herself! There was a louder rumble of thunder, then a shrill voice calling 'Anna Roos! Anna Roos!' The tone was indignant; it was indeed an inconsiderate creature who would unnecessarily run the risk of spoiling her clothes in a storm.

It was not the shrill summons which drew Anna Ruth away; for once she would have disobeyed without compunction. But she could not have Arthur come upon her. Anxiety, curiosity, anguish, jealousy strengthened, but with them pride quickened. She withdrew as rapidly as she could in the darkness and went backward down the yard to the gate, and through the alley to her own porch. The noise in Holland's garage was louder, and she heard a new sound, like the braying of a colossal mule. Then came a deep groan as of some giant, condemned to chains

beneath the surface of the earth, then the shrill scream of a wild-cat. This was Duke Street's method of celebrating a secret or ridiculous marriage. But who could have been married? Was Mrs. Wynne marrying Holland, in spite of public opinion, in spite of right and wrong? This, then, was what ailed Arthur! Anna Ruth grew pale. Was the wedding over? Would all the men and boys and children in Duke Street assemble before the door of beautiful, delicate Mrs. Wynne and behave like lunatics let loose from a mad-house? Would Arthur have to listen? Would he, perhaps, have to appear with money for a treat to persuade them to leave? Oh, shameful! shameful!

Arthur must be warned; if he was going away, he should go quickly. Careless of loose boards, Anna Ruth ran. The garage doors were open and sharp orders were being given in Holland's loud voice. In the back of Mrs. Wynne's house there was a light. Arthur must not go home. Anna Ruth's throat choked, she breathed through her open mouth. Her father called again, 'Anna Roos! Anna Roos! Answer me, Anna Roos!' — she ran on swiftly.

Miss Harriet had returned to her chair, but she had not gathered up her sewing. Her face was

white; she, too, had begun to hear the raucous sounds. She was thinking, not of the bride or groom, nor even of Arthur, nor of mad Duke Street, but of Arthur's father, gentle, clever, lovable, who had erred so fatally in his marriage. Hearing Anna Ruth gasp, she looked round.

'They're getting up a serenade for Mrs. Wynne.'

'For Mrs. Holland,' corrected Miss Harriet. 'They're married.'

'I thought perhaps Arthur was here. He wouldn't like it. He ought to go away.'

'Arthur has gone. He's on his way to the station.'

The hideous confusion thickened, in it the sound of a horn, a bass drum, snare drums, kazoos, and conch shells. A horse-fiddle had been constructed of a barrel with wires stretched across the top. There was a watchman's rattle, there were bells and whistles, and pans pounded by heavy sticks. Human beings shouted and yelled. Hannah Kress was in the throng, screaming, her hair flying in the wind, her shrieks affording a strange relief to her strange soul. Dirty Jimmie Kane was shouting, Burling Crane was beating on a pan, and Caleb Gangeware was praying for Mrs. Wynne's lost soul. Sober citizens were here, among them Mrs. Carson

who was filled with indignation at base Mrs. Wynne, and all the Duke Street children, including even the toddling Barringtons. From the select neighborhood of the Severns and the Galbreaths observers were hastening.

Anna Ruth and Miss Harriet distinguished a new sound; Holland's most powerful car, oiled and ready, was getting under way in the alley. The light went out in the back of the new Mrs. Holland's house, and, terrified and trembling in spite of the exalted station to which she had at last attained, she ran out the gate, her airy scarf floating in the wind. Drawn into the car by the smooth hand of Holland, she began her honeymoon. They reached the end of the long alley, turned into the opulent residential section, and were safe.

'She's gone!' No matter what Mrs. Wynne had done, Anna Ruth was glad she had escaped from these ravenous beasts who only a little while ago had been quiet neighbors.

Miss Harriet quoted grimly from her favorite Ecclesiasticus:

> 'What manner of man hath no honour?
> The seed of man.
> What manner of man hath honour?
> The seed of man.'

Then, not for an instant — that would be too long a space — but for the flash of an eye, the drawing of an ardent breath, the twinkle of a star, Miss Harriet suffered a strange temptation. On the corner of the table lay two volumes of 'The Conquest of Peru.' They had been read to her from beginning to end, they would have constituted, had they been given to her, her dearest possession. Arthur had not known what he was doing in the confusion of his flight. Then the fiend withdrew. Said Miss Harriet, 'Those are for you, Anna Ruth.'

'For me!' Weariness, nervousness, cacophony — all were forgotten. Anna Ruth hastened toward the table. 'He has written my name!' she cried, and Miss Harriet looked into the abyss from which she had escaped. 'Oh, where has he gone, Miss Harriet?'

'To New England. He hopes somehow to enter Harvard and finish his work there. It will be a fine thing for him.'

'And he left these for me?'

'Yes,' answered Miss Harriet a little tartly. 'He left them for you.' She failed to add, 'He asked me to beg you not to forget him.' This member of the Keller tribe had been shown enough favor.

The enthusiasm of the serenaders began to

wane; evidently they had learned of the escape of their victim. The thunder grew louder, and carried on the wind came the familiar 'Anna Roos! Anna Roos!'

'Do you think he'll write to you?' faltered Anna Ruth.

Miss Harriet smiled a little loftily.

'Yes, I think he'll write to me. If I were you, Anna Ruth, I'd run along now. They may come through the alley.' Then Miss Harriet, looking into Anna Ruth's steadfast eyes and seeing also her long arms and legs and the white muslin border which had been sewed at the bottom of the patched gingham dress, regretted her smile. If Anna Ruth had any dreams about Arthur Wynne, she was to be pitied rather than to be smiled at. 'I have some blue gingham and I'm going to make you two dresses.'

'Oh, thank you!' Anna Ruth would have given all she possessed to her friends, and clutching her books she accepted this new benefaction with unembarrassed joy.

Mrs. Keller was in the kitchen and Keller in the store. He turned angrily.

'Where have you been?'

'At Miss Harriet's.' Anna Ruth was always patient.

'What have you there?'

'Some old books.' She inserted the adjective unwillingly but wisely.

'Are they worth anything? Could you sell them?'

'I don't believe you can get anything for old books.' Speaking honestly and ignorantly, Anna Ruth thus saved her treasures.

Carrying them upstairs she sat on the edge of the bed, holding one in each arm. Arthur was gone, but he had thought of her, had left her a gift. Even in the anguish and confusion of departure, he had taken time to write her name. She carried the books to the window and in the next flash of lightning ascertained that he had written in both volumes. She undressed and laid the books beside her in bed, glad that the breaking storm kept her awake so that she could feel them there. To-morrow she would begin to read. Balboa with his eagle eye, silent upon a peak in Darien, was no more transported.

PART II

CHAPTER I

ANNA RUTH HAS A LETTER

THE mid-July day was perfect, warm but not too warm, with a clear sky and a dry atmosphere. At three o'clock in the afternoon, Miss Harriet's yard began to be enchanting. The elm was loftier and its branches dipped nearer the earth, the flowers bloomed riotously, the foliage of the grapevine was thick and its green bunches of fruit hung as though they had been placed deliberately for decorative effect. The ampelopsis had climbed to the top of both brick walls which bounded the yard, and except the wall of Holland's garage, which was still bare, everything in sight was leaf green or sky blue or red or golden.

Miss Harriet sat sewing in her arbor and Anna Ruth sat near by. Miss Harriet had changed little in three years, but Anna Ruth had changed a great deal. She was five inches taller and her hair was long. In spite of the tradition that continued cutting straightens the hair, Anna Ruth's curled closely, and golden light touched the crest of each wave. Her eyes seemed deeper,

her brow more smooth and white. With a few more pounds on her thin frame, she would be transformed, but she appeared undernourished and overworked to those who looked at her at all. Her clothes were forlorn. With Miss Harriet's aid she continued to be decently covered during her high-school course, but that was all that could be said. Miss Harriet had made her a white dress for her graduation; otherwise she had gone clad in gingham. During her whole course she had held her place near the head of her class. Miss Harriet still liked her and pitied her and admired her industry, and patience, but she did not believe that a Keller could go much farther.

Anna Ruth was for once entirely idle. She had crocheting here and crocheting at home at which she worked while she studied and in the few minutes after she had finished her lessons and before she fell asleep. Light and darkness were alike to her deft fingers. Now she merely watched Miss Harriet. Her mind was not empty; on the contrary, it was filled to bursting with intense longing. Arthur had not come back, but he was always in her thoughts. She knew his books by heart, she could have described the civilization of the Peruvians down to the last detail, she dreamed of mighty ruins, of bridges

swung over perilous *quebradas*, of Indians afloat in *balsas* on Lake Titicaca. Sometimes she dreamed that she was a bearer for the Incas and that she fell and was to suffer the death penalty. If Arthur had given her a Bible, she would have been as well acquainted with the history of the Hebrews.

In February, Arthur would finish his work at Harvard. Mathematics and astronomy had been his chief subjects and he had been advised to devote himself to astronomy. He was learning to photograph; some day he would be able to take pictures like that of the nebula in Orion which had been the delight of his childhood. His mother lived in Holland's house in the luxury for which she had sold herself. She did not drive out as often with Holland as at first and Miss Harriet waited to see whether she was tired of Holland, or whether he was tired of her. She suspected the latter; there was, she thought, nothing in Mrs. Holland to hold to, her body was soft, her mind shapeless, her soul non-existent.

'I had a letter from Arthur,' said Miss Harriet after a long silence, as if answering the question in Anna Ruth's mind. She spoke always as if she owned Arthur. She had put away all fear of a connection with this sorrowful Keller.

Anna Ruth tingled over her whole body.

'Is he well?'

'Yes, well and busy and happy. Arthur has a fine mind; he will go far.'

'Yes,' said Anna Ruth hungrily, and waited. She waited in vain. Pride sealed her tongue, but she put her longing into another form. 'Oh, I want to go to college!'

Miss Harriet believed this outcry to be founded on envy and not on a desire for learning. No Keller could have a deep desire for learning.

'Why don't you?' she asked in her dry tone.

'I don't believe my father will let me. Roger lives away from home and Juliet can't help much.'

'How much money have you?'

'You have it all. Twenty-five dollars.' Anna Ruth felt this to be a great deal, yet knew it to be little.

'And the tuition is —?'

'A hundred.'

'If I lend you the other seventy-five and make you a dress or two, will your father let you go?'

'Oh, I hope so!' Anna Ruth began to cry.

'Why not ask him now and have it over?'

Anna Ruth rose without a word and went through the alley into her own yard. She had

tried to keep the yard tidy, but Keller would not be careful.

Mrs. Keller was putting up blackberries which would otherwise have spoiled. She was thinner and more pale and more silent. Anna Ruth would have liked to put her arm round her, but she was afraid of making her cry. Mrs. Keller was frightened by sudden motions or sudden questions; it was best to leave her quietly to her little routine.

Keller sat in the store, his favorite reading in his hand. Having finally shed the sources of intense agony, he was physically more comfortable, but his family affairs did not please him. Juliet did not partake of the common life as a daughter should, and he was always afraid that she was plotting against him, or prying into his private affairs. Like most people he had private affairs, though his business and his life appeared so transparent.

The thought of Roger was a constant irritation. Having left his unpretentious boarding-place, he lived at the Garrett House, and dressed handsomely and drove a powerful roadster. He had little enough occupation to make people wonder about him and enough to prevent the speculation from being widespread or persistent.

He went about with May Hurd when he could not escape her. May worked in the silk mill and earned a great deal; in winter she wore a fur coat and she had a beautiful diamond ring. Her curly hair stood out farther than ever; seen from the back in her extremely décolleté summer dresses she looked like some happy South Sea Islander, but seen from the front she looked anything but happy.

Anna Ruth also was a disappointment to her father; her prospect of earning money in a large way had not yet materialized. It was not her fault; the summer market seemed to be overstocked with expert stenographers from the high school. It did not occur to the Kellers that Anna Ruth would be little of an ornament in the office of a prosperous lawyer. Fortunately, Mrs. Keller was still the same in the eyes of her husband, and so was Beauty — upon these two he could depend.

Anna Ruth stood at the end of the counter and looked down. Keller's head was almost bald, but his mustache bristled about his flaccid mouth as though all hirsute energy were concentrated there. He had not even inquired about substitutes for his lost teeth — such an expense would have been unthinkable; and incredible as

it was he wore the same suit. Squinting, he adjusted his vision to the tall young creature near at hand.

'Well?' he asked sharply.

Anna Ruth stated her business promptly and directly and had a prompt and direct answer.

'Father, I want to go to college.'

'Anna Roos, you're crazy. Crazy with the heat.'

'No, I'm not, Father.'

'You're all crazy. There's Juliet never has anything to say and sticks in her room all the time, and Roger lives at the hotel and drives his own auto. My God, where does he get the money, and why does he carry it to the hotel?'

Anna Ruth had not come to discuss Roger; she had buried Roger deep in her heart.

'You'd all clear out, I believe, every one of you and leave your poor father in poverty.' A tear oozed out on Keller's wrinkled cheek.

'I'll never leave you in poverty,' promised Anna Ruth. 'Never, never. You know I work hard, Father, and you know if I weren't here you'd have to have somebody else. I can keep on helping morning and noon and evening, and when I'm through I can teach, and I can still be here after school and on Saturdays. When I

can teach, I can earn perhaps a hundred dollars a month.'

'"Perhaps!"' mocked Keller. 'I've heard enough of "perhaps." "Perhaps" won't buy the baby no frock. What does it cost to go to college?'

Anna Ruth did not dare to confess that she had twenty-five dollars.

'Miss Harriet will see about the tuition.'

'And meanwhile, I'm to support you?' Keller's tone was suddenly pleasant, almost quizzical. He had been investigating the subject of clerks and had learned that it would cost at least ten dollars a week for a substitute for Anna Ruth, even merely before and after school hours.

'Clear out,' he ordered, granting her request in his fashion and returning to Miss Harriet's paper.

Anna Ruth stopped in to tell Miss Harriet the glorious news, then she walked down the street. At this time of year the campus was almost deserted, and in the half-hour before the afternoon rush at the store, she could assure herself that the college was real. At the corner beside Mr. Line's house, she saw a small and shining car and in it bright-eyed, blue-uniformed Miss Randall. Miss Randall looked composed, but her diagonal position was odd.

'Anna Ruth,' said she in a grave tone. 'Do you know how to back a Ford?'

'No, ma'am,' answered Anna Ruth regretfully. 'But I'll find somebody who knows.'

'You needn't,' laughed Miss Randall. 'I remember! Watch me!'

The turn was made.

'I was told to sit and think. It's good there's not much traffic on Duke Street. Will you go riding with me sometime?'

Anna Ruth flushed to her ears. What would Miss Randall say if she knew that this was her first invitation to ride in an automobile?

'Yes, ma'am!'

'Don't forget!' shrieked Miss Randall as she sailed jerkily and triumphantly away. This is the life!'

'Anna Ruth!'

Speeding on, Anna Ruth was hailed by Carson, smiling and neat in his uniform. He had a section in which there was a good deal of walking, but not much mail to deliver. He had never brought a letter to Anna Ruth. He liked her and pitied her and would have enjoyed doing her little favors had he not suspected that she was getting too old to receive favors from him. He remembered that he had seen her walking with

young Wynne. Perhaps this was a letter from some nice boy. He meant to keep an eye on Anna Ruth and her affairs.

'I have a letter for you.'

'A letter!' A wild hope leaped in Anna Ruth's heart. A letter! Could it be from Cambridge? She had never had a letter. She took it into her hand. The postmark was Middlebury. But it was a letter.

'Thank you!'

Sitting on Line's doorstep she slit open the envelope. It was addressed to her plainly in printing, 'Miss Anna Ruth Keller, Middlebury, Pa.' She unfolded the single sheet. The printed message read, 'You'd better watch out for your brother or the police will get him.' It was not such a message as Carson would have wished for Anna Ruth!

There was a sudden resurrection in Anna Ruth's heart; Roger was not buried so deep that he could not rise at once and stand before her, handsome, adored, in danger. She leaped up and ran stumblingly for a block. Were the police after him now? Oh, surely not! She stood for an instant to get her breath. He would not like her to arrive at the hotel all blown and forlorn. But she could not keep a slow pace; she trotted the

next block and the next, and turning a corner came upon Roger's abode.

Holland, who was the proprietor of the Garrett House, had recently repaired and redecorated the lobby and added a fine porch, like a bouquet pinned on an old man. Travelers arriving from the station saw only the porch and were at the desk and registered before they realized how dingy was the long building behind. It was on the new porch that Roger sat a good deal of the summer; unlike his sister, he was an ornament to any neighborhood.

Failing to see him in his usual place, Anna Ruth crossed the street and went boldly up the steps. A stranger on the porch saw the convex of a white knee, a stranger across the street the concave. She pushed open the screen door and crossed the lobby bravely but uncertainly, her foot being unaccustomed to tiles.

'I want to see Roger Keller.'

The stout clerk was amazed; it did the hotel no good to have callers like this; Keller must be told that his female friends, whether business or otherwise, must come in the evening to the side door.

'A good many girls want to see Roger,' he answered rudely.

'I'm his sister.' Anna Ruth lifted her head.

'He seems to have a good many sisters.'

'I must see him,' she insisted with dignity, her head still higher. 'I'll wait for him.'

'Not here you won't wait for him, Missy. We don't like lady callers. Only a few days ago I had to tell a bobbed-haired sister of Roger's to step out.'

Anna Ruth crossed the tiled floor and went down the steps and stood on the curb with her arm round a pillar. The clerk had shamed her, but love and fear were stronger than shame. She anchored herself firmly, and fortunately in a few minutes Roger's car drew up at the curb. It slid in softly, and Roger sat and stared, his face crimson.

'What do you want?'

'Here's a letter.'

Roger read it with a single glance and thrust it into his pocket.

'It's a lie. Somebody's making sport of you, Anna Ruth. You're a fool to pay attention to such a thing.' Shaken by emotion, which might be anger or fear, or indignation or even mortification, he spoke in a low, thick voice. 'Clear out, and never come here again.' He fixed Anna Ruth with a burning eye. 'Clear out, Anna Ruth!'

Then he leaned forward. 'If you have anything to say to me, write it.'

Trembling, with college forgotten, Anna Ruth made her way home. It proved to be as Roger said, somebody must have been playing a joke on her, because days and weeks passed and he was unmolested. Stealing down in the evenings, Anna Ruth saw him on the porch and was comforted. On the way home she always looked up at the stars, and before she went to bed she leaned far out the window. She could see the North Star and the Dipper and Cassiopeia. Sometimes she repeated names which Arthur had taught her, Alkaid, Mizar, Alioth, Megrez, Phecda, Merak, Dubhe.

CHAPTER II

JULIET COMES OF AGE

ANNA RUTH slept only by fits and starts. The stovepipe in the kitchen was pushed in tight, but the September night was stormy and each fresh dash of rain on the tin roof waked her from an uneasy nap. The paint on the roof was washed away, the surface was uniformly dingy, and there was no telling whether it would ever be painted again.

All night Anna Ruth thought of Juliet, then of college. Sometimes when she had a brief nap it was Juliet who was going to college and not she. To-day, now that the clock had struck midnight, was Juliet's twenty-first birthday, and to-morrow college opened. Fifty times during the summer she had walked out to the campus and sat on the steps and thought of Arthur and listened to a girl practicing vocal scales in one of the faculty houses. Sometimes the girl sang songs, then Anna Ruth understood that the music she knew, except that which she heard in church, was not music at all. There was one song which made her cry. It began,

'Falling leaf and fading tree,
Lines of white on a summer sea.'

When the singer came to the part which said,

'The oil is spent, the cruse is dry,'

she seemed to be singing from a broken heart, and a sharp pang rent the tissue of Anna Ruth's vague, happy thoughts of Arthur.

There was another song which moved Anna Ruth still more profoundly. It said:

Love never faileth, love never faileth.
Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail,
Whether there be tongues, they shall cease,
But love never faileth, love never faileth.

The smooth sounds seemed to lie upon the air, like delicate leaves upborne by a soft breeze. Hearing, Anna Ruth wept. Her love would never fail.

Miss Harriet had made her both a gingham and a woolen dress and had promised to remodel her coat. A hat she would not need; college girls went hatless. Now that she promised to pass beyond that point where Miss Harriet believed development would be arrested, as in the children of primitive races, Miss Harriet's interest deepened.

Still thin and pale and quiet and discontented,

Juliet had no such bright prospect, unless the coming of age were considered a prospect. She apparently had no interest in life, and certainly none in her work or her family or her home. Anna Ruth had a birthday present for her, a string of blue beads and several yards of crocheted lace, and she hoped that Juliet would be pleased. She would have been pleased if any one had remembered her birthday with the gift of a paper of common pins.

Wakening after a final hour's sleep, she felt the hard bed, then she saw the gray light of a rainy dawn, and smelled the odors of the stove and the kitchen and the store, all made heavier by the dampness which penetrated in spite of closed windows.

She rose and dressed and went downstairs happily, and found herself the first comer. She lifted the window in the store and Beauty leaped out with the usual beautiful, disdainful curve of his body. She was surprised to see that her mother had forgotten to lock the kitchen door — how fortunate that she had discovered it instead of Keller! The exposing of his property to thieves would have roused his sharpest ire.

Mrs. Keller was the next to appear.

'I'm late,' she said with a quiver of her body.

She was tying an apron round her waist as though to gird herself for the day's battle.

'Oh, no!' said Anna Ruth cheerfully. She could not bear to look at her mother. When she was earning a good salary, she would buy her better clothes, no matter what Keller said.

Keller, descending, was not in a happy mood; the rain had, he believed mistakenly, kept him awake all night. He sat down at the partly laid table and looked at the clock.

'Juliet ought to be here. She'll be late at her work.'

'It's her birthday,' explained Anna Ruth. 'She's twenty-one. Perhaps she's going to celebrate by taking an extra nap.'

Keller looked at first disgusted with Anna Ruth's levity, then disturbed. At twenty-one children frequently threw off the divinely appointed parental yoke.

Mrs. Keller placed the fried potatoes on the table and Keller pulled in his chair.

'You call Juliet, Anna Roos.'

Anna Ruth was about to shout from the bottom of the steps, then she ran up instead.

'Juliet!' she called, opening the door into the third story. 'Juliet!'

There was no answer and her heart turned a

somersault, then stopped short. Juliet's face had been whiter than usual, her eyes more somber. She began to climb slowly, her hand on the rail.

'Julie!' she said softly.

At the head of the stairs she stood still. She heard the rain beat on the low roof, she looked out at a rain-veiled sky. There had once been a suicide on the block and the children knew all the details, how the man's wife had gone about calling, calling, and eventually, climbing to the attic, had found him.

With blessed relief she remembered the unlocked kitchen door, and her heart returned to normal activity. It was not necessary to look into Juliet's room; she had risen early and gone to some mysterious religious service. Automatically, however, Anna Ruth took a few steps to Juliet's threshold. The sheets had been removed from the bed and lay folded on a chair — that was strange! The little prayer-book was gone from the bureau — that was even more strange. In its place lay a note, addressed to 'Father and All.' Anna Ruth opened it and read it and carried it downstairs, feeling blindly with her foot on each step. Keller's impatient voice floated to meet her — 'Anna Roos! Anna Roos! Anna Roos!'

Laying the note on the table before him, she went to her place. Keller raised the paper to his near-sighted eyes and held it away from him and moved it back again. Never before had one Keller communicated with another in writing.

'A Sister!' he read. 'She's gone to be a Sister! She's a Sister already.'

'A Catholic?' said Mrs. Keller in a puzzled tone. She had often watched curiously the quiet going about of her neighbors.

Anna Ruth felt an awful self-reproach. If she had only told about Juliet's piety!

'Perhaps she's right back here with the ladies,' she said, beginning to cry. 'They're called Sisters. We could go at once and bring her home. I have a birthday present for her.'

'A birthday present!' Keller looked at Anna Ruth as he had looked when he caught her giving a nickel to Azalea.

Anna Ruth took the little parcel from her pocket.

'Miss Harriet gave me beads to string and I crocheted some lace. Oh, if we only weren't poor, if she could have had more, perhaps she wouldn't have gone away!' The Sister house seemed a strange and dreadful place, the Catholic

religion incomprehensible, Juliet's situation perilous. 'Aren't we going after her, Father?'

Juliet had not been a satisfactory daughter, her attitude toward her father had not been pleasant and her contribution to the family income had been small, but Keller spoke positively.

'Yes, I'm going after her; of course, I'm going after her. You're to come along.'

Keller finished eating his fried potatoes, but Anna Ruth ate nothing. Mrs. Keller sat silently with tightly closed hands. Anna Ruth took her old umbrella from the corner and opened the door, impatient to be gone. The rain poured, the room filled with dampness and a gray haze. Mrs. Keller still sat motionless and silent, her lips parted.

'Can you tend store?' asked Keller impatiently. Still Mrs. Keller did not answer and he shook his head as at a hopeless situation and led the way out of the house toward the tunnel.

'Let's go the back way,' proposed Anna Ruth. There was no reason to create a sensation in Duke Street. They went down the boardwalk, into the alley, past Mr. Holland's garage, and across to the rear gate of the Catholic property, where there were three buildings, the church, the school,

and the convent, all painted a dove-like gray. Anna Ruth felt a queer terror, lest the bell might ring summoning the people to watch her and her father. The bell was loud; on clear days it had a rich deep sound, but on rainy days it was mournful.

'Where do we go?' asked Keller.

'To the house where the ladies live, I guess. I suppose we ring the bell.'

They ascended the steps bravely and Keller pressed the button, holding his other hand to his breast, as though within an affectionate heart beat for Juliet. Immediately there was a stir and the door was opened about a foot. The Sister who looked out was fully dressed for the street — did she wear this somber and inconvenient garb all the time or was she waiting to receive them? They stood awkwardly.

'I want to see my daughter Juliet.' Keller spoke firmly, expecting to have to insist upon his rights.

'If she's here,' added Anna Ruth gently.

The door was opened wide into a hall, white and bare.

'Come in,' invited the Sister. 'She's here.'

She stepped back, and they passed her, carrying the odor of spoiled bananas and cabbage and

poor tobacco and kerosene into the clean place. Their footfalls sounded irreverently loud.

Juliet appeared at once, and they all sat down in a plainly furnished parlor, the Sister with them. In her old dress with her little wedge-shaped face Juliet was just as she had been yesterday and the day before. She waited for them to speak, sitting dumbly with her hands folded, her eyes cast down. Her nose looked pinched, her mouth drooped at the corners. In this attitude of submission she was amazingly like her mother. But she was strange to them and they too sat dumb. Anna Ruth found her voice first.

'Oh, Juliet, come home!'

Juliet shook her head.

'I have a vocation.'

This was a word of no meaning to Anna Ruth, and Keller misunderstood.

'A vacation!' he cried. 'Why do you need a vacation? I never took a vacation.'

The Sister was young and loquacious; for the latter fault she had often been reproved.

'She's come voluntarily,' she explained. 'She feels a call from God. She's free to go back with you if she wishes, free as air.'

'Here's a birthday present for you.' Anna Ruth laid the beads and lace on Juliet's knee.

'I have no use for them.' To Juliet's eternal credit, her voice was unsteady. Without looking at Anna Ruth she handed the parcel back. 'I'm not allowed to own anything. I'm going to live in a convent.'

'Will you dress in black clothes?'

'Yes.'

Keller began to fumble in his breast pocket; what he had pressed there was not his heart, but a little tablet upon which he figured.

'Juliet,' said he, 'I ask you in the presence of witnesses — will you come back to your natural home?'

'No,' replied Juliet gently. 'I'm twenty-one, I can do as I like. I am a Catholic. I made up my mind to this long ago.'

'You're leaving us and deserting us,' said Keller. 'Are you willing to say on paper that you give up everything?'

A smile flickered across Juliet's face. All that there was to give up she willingly resigned, all her right in the little house, in the poor furniture, the overripe bananas, the shabby clothes — there was nothing else there.

'I'm willing to give up everything. Anna Ruth is welcome to my things.'

Keller wrote a few words on the little pad: 'I

give up all my share in my father's property.' She signed it at once in a large round hand — 'Juliet Keller.'

'I must have a witness.' Keller scrutinized the young face in the closely folded coif. 'Will you sign, lady, just to show you saw my daughter sign? You ought to write your real name, not your fancy name.'

The Sister was not only loquacious, she was inexperienced and impulsive. Juliet was her own prize, and, believing that she was helping to bind her fast, she wrote in a childish hand like Juliet's 'Mary O'Connor, Sister Genevieve,' a smile flickering in her gray eyes. The poor little man — she knew his little store and his little wife and his overgrown Anna Ruth. His only treasure had been taken for the eternal salvation of her soul.

Keller rose to go.

'Can I come to see you?' wept Anna Ruth. Tears ran down her cheeks, she could not control her sobbing.

'I'm going away,' said Juliet, exaltation in the eyes which she now turned full upon them.

'To Brooklyn, New York,' explained the Sister, still with kindly communicativeness. 'That's far away. She's to be a Sister of Saint

Margaret, on Clinton Street in Brooklyn, New York.'

The Sister rose, dismissal in every motion. It was kind, she believed, to terminate this painful interview.

'Come, Anna Roos,' said Keller. 'Let's go home.'

Anna Ruth rose obediently.

'Good-bye, Juliet,' she sobbed.

'Good-bye,' said Juliet with composure.

'Aren't you coming home at all?'

'It wouldn't be any use,' explained the young Sister. 'She's made up her mind.'

She opened the door politely and they stepped out into the rain.

Mrs. Keller sat where they left her, looking at the door. Keller walked in first and Anna Ruth came behind him crying. She had forgotten to raise her umbrella and water dripped from her hair to her shoulders.

'She's made her bed,' declared Keller, briskly and almost pleasantly, his hand still upon his breast. 'She'll have to lay there. Now, Mother, you wake up. Here are all your dishes standing.'

Looking exactly like Juliet, Mrs. Keller fixed her eyes upon Anna Ruth. Keller was already pushing open the front shutters and from there

the sound of rain came in a new key. It was still not quite seven o'clock.

'What was she doing?'

'She sat in the parlor and talked to us, explained Anna Ruth, her head on her arms on the table. 'She says she won't come back. She's going to Brooklyn, New York.'

'I expect she'll do nothing but pray all day long,' said Mrs. Keller, speaking with awe.

'I don't know,' wailed Anna Ruth. 'I don't know what they do in those places all day long.'

'I expect she'll pray for us.' Mrs. Keller sat for a long time motionless, ignoring the call of duty, and, more strangely, the command of her husband. 'I expect she'll pray for me.'

At six o'clock in the evening, Anna Ruth went to find Roger. The rain still fell, the Catholic bell was tolling mournfully. No matter if Roger had left them, he still belonged to them. She forgot the insolent clerk and the staring eyes in the lobby; she would have penetrated to Roger's very room.

Fortunately, Roger was stepping into his car. He wore a yellow, glistening raincoat and a hat pulled low over his eyes. About a dozen miles away, a stream, named Lovers' Creek, had cut ages ago a deep channel through the hills, and

along it ran a narrow highway called the Medford Road. There was but one house in three miles, and it was strange that any one had business there on a dark and rainy night. But thither Roger was bound. Seeing Anna Ruth, he ground his heel on the starter, but the car did not obey and he was compelled to listen.

'Juliet has left us.' Anna Ruth's voice was thick with tears, her eyes were red, and even her mouth was swollen.

'Has she? Well, I'm not the one to blame her for that,' answered Roger, amused, and still pressing down with his foot. 'I set the example.'

'She's gone to be a Sister of Saint Margaret on Clinton Street in Brooklyn, New York.' To Anna Ruth all this was Juliet's new title.

'A what?' Roger ceased producing the whirring noise which drowned Anna Ruth's voice, and listened quite patiently, for him. 'Joy go with her,' he said at last. 'She has my consent.' He pressed his heel again and the car started.

Back at the store, Anna Ruth heard a strange voice and looked in. To her unbounded amazement, Mr. Holland was talking to her father. His words were unintelligible and his voice reverberated like the hum of a giant bee. To-

morrow was the day for the trimming of his curly hair and it stood thickly round his head. A diamond gleamed from his tie, another from his finger, and another from an insignia on his watch-chain.

Keller had raised his arm as though to defend himself from some amazing and infamous charge, or perhaps even from physical violence.

'Humbug!' he cried shrilly. 'Nonsense! It's a lie! It isn't true!'

He turned on his heel and walked into the kitchen, shutting the door and leaving Holland alone. To Anna Ruth's recollection never had any one been left alone in the store. Holland looked astonished, then amused, then annoyed. He left at once, feeling his way down the steps in the gathering darkness.

Seeing him go, Anna Ruth forgot him. If she was to sleep, there must be a clear understanding that to-morrow she was to go to college. She entered the tunnel and the yard and the kitchen, where Keller stood by the table looking back at the door he had closed between him and his visitor. Roused by her coming, he opened it gingerly and peered into the store.

'I'll get up early,' said Anna Ruth pleasantly, but with the inward sensations of one who walks

on a tight-rope over Niagara. 'I'll get all done I can before I start to college.'

'College!' screamed Keller, making the word hideous. 'College! College! Must I hear about college on top of all I've had to bear to-day? College! College!'

Now Anna Ruth knew that she was doomed. She turned and went out, down the boardwalk, through the alley, under the dripping tree and through the dripping arbor, to Miss Harriet's door. Miss Harriet was burning a few sticks of wood to take the chill from her rooms. She looked now at the pleasant glow of the fire, now at the Constitution standing out so boldly, now at the nebula in Orion. She could fancy strange figures there, chief among them a beautiful naked woman with her hands clasped on her breast, gazing into a chaos of flame.

She looked up at Anna Ruth and laid her sewing on her knee. For Anna Ruth's troubles she did not cast it on the floor.

'What's the matter?'

Standing with her back to the door, Anna Ruth spoke in an even tone.

'Juliet has gone to be a Catholic Sister.'

Miss Harriet lifted her eyebrows. 'Well, that's not a bad place for Juliet.'

'But now I can't go to college. You needn't fix my coat. It's out of the question. I can't go to college.' Her voice swelled into a sort of defiance, as though she dared Miss Harriet to contradict her.

'Come and sit down.'

'No,' said Anna Ruth. 'There's no reason for sitting down. I came to tell you I won't need the seventy-five dollars. I can't go to college. Juliet, you see, was going to help in the store, but she's gone. I can't go to college.'

Miss Harriet looked at the Constitution. She was not an unselfish person and she loved quiet and peace.

'You can come to live here,' she invited. 'I'll see you through.' It would have been easy to do this for Arthur; it was hard to do it for Anna Ruth. 'Your father can hire a clerk, he surely makes enough for that!'

Anna Ruth looked steadily at Miss Harriet. To live here! With books and cleanliness and peace and decency and memories of Arthur! She would be here when his letters came; she would be here when he came. All the time she would be following him, overtaking him. But Roger had forsaken his father and mother and now Juliet was gone. Anna Ruth had no quota-

tion about the seed of man, but she knew what honor was.

'Oh, no!' she gasped. 'I couldn't do that!'

Miss Harriet was irritated by this rejection of her offer.

'Is it that you're proud?'

'Proud?' Anna Ruth squinted her eyes together as though she saw the word and was studying it. 'Proud? No, I'm not proud. But I couldn't do that.'

In the middle of the night she woke crying. Her cheeks were wet and tears had soaked into her pillow. But she was not grieving over her own disappointment.

'They'll cut off her beautiful hair,' she mourned. 'All her beautiful, beautiful hair.'

CHAPTER III

ANNA RUTH HAS A VISITOR

'NEVER knew it to fail,' declared Freddy Barrington, leaning against the counter, his cigar in his mouth. 'Never. They may be equal to little things, but not great things. There they always fall down. Look how they behave at a fire, now. If you don't believe me, Keller, you keep your eyes open. Remember that fire in Florida and how the women lost their heads? That was a scream!'

Keller looked up from his seat on the padded box. It was five months since Juliet had gone, but her departure had not troubled him; he put the paper she signed in a safe place and thought of her no more. Anna Ruth was worth ten of Juliet.

'Smith Tea's no good,' he announced positively and triumphantly. 'People that put their good money in Smith Tea are fooled. Kelly Motor's going up, it's 22 now.' He went on rapidly about Kentucky Copper and Piggly Wiggly; apparently he memorized everything he read in Miss Harriet's paper.

Freddy waited patiently.

'At that fire in Florida they threw themselves from the windows when there were plenty of fire escapes.'

Freddy's cigar had gone out and he lit it again. The process produced a worse odor than steady combustion, if that were possible; it filled the store and the kitchen where Mrs. Keller and Anna Ruth were sitting. Mrs. Keller paid no attention to it. Melancholia had descended upon her at last; she was not merely depressed, she was ill in mind. She worked as hard as ever, but she had an idea that she could not speak. She sat now looking at the open page of her Bible, but it was doubtful whether she saw the printed words.

Anna Ruth felt faint, and, rising, put a shawl over her head and opened the door.

'I'm going out a minute, Mother.'

Her voice had deepened, it quivered because of her mother whose case she had diagnosed correctly. It was no wonder that Mrs. Keller had lost interest in life, the steady pressure of four walls had crushed her. How dreadful poverty was, and how unconquerable! Her father worked, her mother worked, and she worked, all of them, all day long, yet they got nowhere and had nothing.

Mrs. Keller did not answer and Anna Ruth stepped out on the porch. A cold wind whined round the corners of the house, the sky was overcast, and snow seemed imminent. There had been a great deal of snow; for the last two months dirty gray mounds had rounded out the deposits of ashes and tin cans.

Afraid to go far away from her mother, Anna Ruth paced the boardwalk, a proceeding which required skill. Frost and snow had quenched the odors from the refuse heaps; otherwise it would have required also extraordinary dullness of smell. She walked rapidly, breathing quickly; the terror that darkened her mother's life sometimes reached out for her also, touching her with a warning finger. When her depression became acute, she read Arthur's books.

Arthur had not come back and Miss Harriet dropped only an occasional crumb of information about him. It was highly probable that having finished his work in February he had been invited to become an instructor. Miss Harriet expected that eventually he would become the President of Harvard University. No one else in Duke Street knew where he was; once his mother received a letter containing six words, 'Have you done for Arthur, too?'

Anna Ruth walked up and down, up and down, the raw wind cooling her hot cheek. It was hard to feel immaculate in the odorous house and hard to keep immaculate with such poor equipment. The clean wind seemed to blow through her, and, damp as it was, she liked it. She had a hope that next year, by some miracle, she might still go to college. She was only eighteen and she had forgotten none of her preparatory work.

She heard footsteps in the alley, but paid no attention to them, even though they paused opposite the gate. The gate was closed, there was no reason for fear. Sometimes customers entered that way, risky to human bones as it was. She halted, peering through the gloom at a tall figure. When the figure did not move on, she called in her clear voice, 'What do you want?'

'Anna Ruth,' said a voice in answer, 'Is that you?'

Anna Ruth stood paralyzed — was there anybody at the gate, or did she imagine both voice and presence

'What do you want?' she asked again. 'Who are you?'

'Anna Ruth, is that you?'

With eyes fixed on the shadowy figure she moved slowly along, her gaze straining through

the darkness. She began to pray. 'Oh, God, please! Please, please, O God!'

The tall figure was directly before her, separated from her only by the gate.

'It's Arthur, Anna Ruth.'

She took the last steps falteringly.

'I was coming to find you, then I heard some one walking, and I thought it might be you. It is you, Anna Ruth?'

'Yes,' answered Anna Ruth, at last. 'When did you come?' Gradually the outlines of his face grew clear, then the vague figure — it was Arthur.

'On the seven o'clock train and I'm going away at nine. I came to say good-bye to Miss Harriet and you.' Arthur faltered on the last word, because he had no one else to say good-bye to. He had looked long at the house which enshrined a dim recollection of his father, but he had not glanced at Mr. Holland's.

'"Good-bye"?' repeated Anna Ruth. 'Where are you going? You're not going farther away?'

Arthur laughed lightly and unnaturally. He saw Anna Ruth's hands against the dark fence, not lying upon it, but holding to it for support and he dropped his own upon them, covering them from the cold. He was twenty-two now,

but he was only a little less shy than when he went away, and he was overwhelmed by the old shame. His hands were as cold as Anna Ruth's and he made his startling announcement as though he scarcely believed it himself.

'I'm going to South America.'

'To South America!'

'To Peru.'

'Peru!' Anna Ruth's eyes gleamed; she thought first of his happiness, not of her own because he was here, or of her distress because he was going so far away. She saw snow-covered mountains and deep gorges and ruined cities. 'To Peru!' she said again, gasping. Now she could see faintly his beautiful mouth. Her hands grew warm, her heartbeats quickened, her breath came unevenly.

'Harvard has an observatory at Arequipa and I have an appointment as photographer. I'm going to take pictures of the Southern Cross and Alpha Centauri, Anna Ruth!'

'Shall you see Cuzco?' asked Anna Ruth in awe. 'Where the golden plates were that they fetched for Atahualpa's ransom?'

'Cuzco and Lima and the buried cities that they're digging open, and the Inca roads.'

'Are you going now?'

'On the night train. I sail to-morrow and I've seen Miss Harriet. I have a half-hour with you.' The words came jerkily.

'I've read your books and read them and read them.' Anna Ruth shifted her position. Nails protruded from the broken boardwalk and one had pierced the sole of her shoe. Pain pricked her, but she would not move enough to change the position of her hands. There was a sharper pain in her heart. A half-hour! Did they have a half-hour? It was far later than Arthur thought. If she only had some place to take him where they could be alone! The store, the kitchen — they were all she had. Miss Harriet's? A deep instinct kept her from Miss Harriet's.

'I hung about waiting,' said Arthur. He had acquired the smooth speech of New England; his words dropped, to Anna Ruth's ears, like music from his lips. 'I was afraid I should have to brave your family. How are Juliet and Roger?'

'Juliet has gone into a convent and Roger lives at the hotel.' Evidently Miss Harriet had not thought it worth while to impart the history of the Kellers. 'There's no one here but me.'

'And you're in college?'

'Not this year,' answered Anna Ruth bravely. 'But next year. I'm all ready. I had to help at

home this year.' He must not think she was going to slide back!

Rain, and not snow, began to fall, heavily and with no preliminary scattering drops, and at the same instant there was the faint whistle of a train from Dalton five miles away. Fortunately, the station was only a two minutes' run.

'I hope you'll be happy!' cried Anna Ruth. The pressure of his hands grew closer and she felt indifferently the prick of pain in her foot. Neither she nor Arthur knew anything of love-making, nor even of tenderness. May Hurd had embraced Anna Ruth long ago; Miss Harriet sometimes laid her hand on Arthur's shoulder.

'Good-bye,' said Arthur.

'Good-bye,' answered Anna Ruth.

'Will you promise not to forget me?'

'I never forget you,' declared Anna Ruth. 'Never.' The pouring rain echoed the earnestness of her voice. Their arms ached to clasp each other; their young bodies yearned for only so much as a fleeting caress; their hearts for promises and vows. 'I think of you every day, when I wake in the morning and when I go to sleep at night, and in between.'

'If I could only see you!' said Arthur in a whisper. 'If only you haven't changed!'

As if a kindly genie lingered near, Anna Ruth's uplifted face was instantly illuminated. A light from Holland's garage showed her white brow, her waving hair, her eyes filled with tears. She wished to say, 'I haven't changed. I'll never change to you!' but she could not frame the words. Arthur laughed, then he put his young arms round her and pressed a shy kiss on her wet cheek. The train whistled again, now it was only two miles away.

'Are you surely coming back?' she asked with a sob.

'I'm surely coming back.'

He let her go and ran, and the downpour silenced his footsteps instantly. She stood in the rain listening, listening. She could hear the grinding brakes and the hoarsely puffing engine and the clanging bell. She put her hand against her cheek. Ten minutes passed before, gasping and dripping, she opened the kitchen door.

'It's raining,' she said, staring bright-eyed at her mother.

If Mrs. Keller had glanced up, she might have found something in Anna Ruth's eyes to rouse even her depressed soul to interest, but she did not even realize that Anna Ruth had been away.

Anna Ruth sat, all dripping as she was, on the

edge of her bed. He was gone! Elliston, the first station — he had passed that; Rothville, Scotland, Thurlow — beyond was unknown country. He was going to New York, to sea, to Lima and Arequipa and Cuzco! But he had kissed her, her, poor Anna Ruth. But he was gone! Her mother came up the stairs, and after a long time Keller followed. Mrs. Keller came silently; Keller hummed tunelessly; the news in Miss Harriet's paper seemed to have pleased him. Neither glanced into Anna Ruth's room, and, still sitting upright in the dark, she heard neither pass. Everywhere, except on her cheek, was cold and rain, but on her cheek flame burned, like a volcano which no flood could quench.

CHAPTER IV

THE MADNESS OF BEAUTY

BEAUTY lay on the counter, waving his long tail. The tightly closed house was like a vacuum chamber and into it the roaring wind which rose after two days of rain could not force its way. It had an angry tone as though, foiled of entrance, it meditated destruction.

Watching Mrs. Keller go through the store toward the stairway on her way to bed, Beauty turned his eyes to follow her as though he suspected that she was more tired than usual. Mrs. Keller turned her eyes also; she looked fearfully at Anna Ruth in the kitchen, fearfully at Keller in the store, and fearfully at Beauty. She was not afraid of Anna Ruth and Keller; she was afraid for them, because they did not go to church or read their Bibles. But she feared Beauty. Though she thought the reading of fiction wrong, she once read a hideous account of a cat walled up with a murdered woman, and wailing until his mistress's body was discovered and his master taken into custody. The story

often came into her mind when she looked at Beauty and she remembered it now and quickened her steps.

Roused from his usual evening occupation, Keller rose also and went to try windows and doors. It was as he thought; he had locked them all securely a half-hour ago.

'Time to go to bed, Anna Roos,' he said, addressing the kitchen door. 'Rich people can read all night if they want to, but not poor people.' He called imperatively, 'Do as I say, Anna Roos!'

Anna Ruth glanced at the clock, then closed her book. She had been reading about dangerous *quebradas* and treacherous fevers, and she quivered. She felt alternating agony and bliss in both soul and body. The nail upon which she had stood had left a bluish mark upon her foot and, when she curled her toes, pain leaped up her leg like a knife seeking her heart. When she straightened her foot, she could almost believe that she imagined the pain. It was this way also with her heart; remembering that Arthur was gone, she shuddered; remembering that he had kissed her, she forgot her misery. He had been here on Monday evening and this was Wednesday — he must be at sea now.

Beauty watched Anna Ruth go upstairs, then, still waving his tail, he looked at Keller. He hated to be shut up with bad smells, good as the hunting was. There was this evening a strange, faint, sickening odor which he remembered from the past, but which had been absent for a long time. A heavy truck had come through Duke Street, shaking the earth, and the pipe had slipped out in its old fashion.

When Keller extinguished the light, Beauty leaped from the counter and tried to sneak between his legs and accompany him upstairs. But Keller was too quick for him; he shut the door in his face, then uttered a little hissing sound, partly in triumph and partly to urge Beauty to the slaughter of his prey.

Beauty did not return to his place on the counter, he seemed to be obeying his master. He prowled slowly about, sniffing under the doors, then leaped to the window-sills one after the other and pressed his cold nose to the cracks. Bars on the shutters held them tight and the windows were down and locked — air could come as easily through a solid wall. He looked into the kitchen and in the red light of the stove his eyes shone green. The wind was so high that the fire could not be kept down to its usual low

combustion. These doors and windows, too, were securely fastened. Even the cellar door, which was usually left open so that he could do his duty as a mouser, was shut.

He went round and round, his pace quickening. Presently he began to growl as though in anger, then to whine as though in fear. For a while growls alternated with whines. Suddenly he hopped to the counter and walked up and down, lashing his tail; then he went completely out of his head and began to run, colliding with everything in his way. He leaped to the nearest shelf and rushed along it, knocking over jars and cans. He uttered a wail as dreadful as that produced by the immured beast of whom Mrs. Keller had read. He was a smart cat, and he understood thoroughly that he was fighting for his life. His shriek expressed both terror of creeping death and rage with the human beings who closed windows and barred doors.

All his rage was vain. Mrs. Keller, who ordinarily slept as lightly as a bird, was deaf to the crash of glass; Keller, who lived in hourly fear of burglars and who woke a dozen times in the night, heard no thud of heavy quart cans sent flying ten feet to a bare floor. Beauty stopped to listen, then he dashed on. The

periods of his activity became longer, the periods of his listening shorter. In one brief halt he heard a vague moaning and he lengthened his leaps and sharpened his cries. He sent a can of cherries to the floor from a high shelf and the can burst with a loud detonation. He jumped upon the scales and created a clatter; he leaped clawing at the stairway door.

At midnight Anna Ruth was wakened, not by Beauty's clamor, or the crashing sounds, but by pain. Her foot was curled up and she struggled for an eternity to straighten it out; then, partially roused and at once aware of the clatter, she rolled from her bed to the floor, and the impact woke her completely. She began to call, 'Father! Father!' but there was no answer. Another can thudded to the counter, thence to the floor. Was Keller struggling with burglars? She heard Beauty's scream, the crash of breaking glass, even the pouring of liquids. There was something wrong with Beauty; his cries were human in their agony.

She realized that she was nauseated and that consciousness was leaving her, and with the last operation of her brain, she detected the deadly saturation of the air. Rolling toward the window she crept to her knees and pushed up the sash.

The wind entered howling and she clung to the sill with both hands and opened her mouth.

Fully aware of hovering death, she crept across the floor, through the hall into her father's and mother's room, still calling as she went. Past the bed, past the bureau — at last with a mighty effort she pushed up the sash. The wind had now a direct course and its roar was enough to wake any sleeper, however sound.

'Father!' called Anna Ruth. 'Father!'

With a moan she stumbled to an upright position. Why could she not straighten out her foot? It was straightened out, but the pain was still there. By the light of the street lamp she could see side by side in the bed two huddled figures. Touching one, then the other, she turned back toward the window.

'Help!' she called. 'Help! Oh, help!'

Hannah heard first, then the Carsons, then Mrs. Barrington, then Line, who was accustomed to calls in the middle of the night. Alarmed by the distress in Anna Ruth's voice and having had a great deal of sorrowful experience, Line telephoned the police station before he dressed. Hannah Kress hung out the window as she gathered her hair into a rough knot, feeling about meanwhile with her foot for the shoes and

stockings she kicked off as she sat late at night waiting for something to happen. What annoying and elusive articles shoes and stockings were when one was in a hurry! Mrs. Carson said, 'You shan't go! You shan't go!' and held her little husband tightly. When Freddy Barrington refused to budge from his safe, warm bed, because Anna Ruth's trouble, whatever it was, was none of his business, Mrs. Barrington put on shoes and stockings and a coat and went running up the street, calling, 'I'm coming, Anna Ruth! I'm coming!'

By this time Line had laid his strong old shoulder to the kitchen door and burst it in. Something shot past him like a cannon ball, and with it came the sickening odor.

'Coal gas!' he shouted to Mrs. Barrington. He entered boldly, struck a match, and lit the light.

'Will it explode?' Mrs. Barrington followed without waiting for an answer.

'No. Look there!' Line stepped on a chair, then on the table, and pushed in the pipe.

Mrs. Barrington opened the stairway door and went up. An officer came, then Miss Randall running, then a doctor with a pulmotor. There were lights and confusion and expressions of horror and people everywhere. Mrs. Carson not

only came herself, but allowed Carson to come; Caleb Gangeware arrived and knelt; Anna Ruth was lifted to her bed. Mr. Keller breathed again and presently sat up and was well, and looked with indignation at the throng in his bedroom. Mrs. Keller would never breathe or sit up or be frightened any more.

It was not until morning that any one remembered that Mrs. Keller had two other children. But Juliet could not come; the Order of Saint Margaret had a strict rule and she would see father and mother and brother and sister no more; she would see only the other Sisters of Saint Margaret. She would see little beyond one patch of sky of all the glorious expanse, that which was visible from between garden walls in one corner of Brooklyn, and few flowers except such as were planted in that narrow space. But she had never looked at the sky from Duke Street and the garden was like Eden compared to her father's yard.

Roger was away; the stout man at the desk in the hotel said very politely, and not without concern for the Kellers' misfortunes, that he was expected back that night and that he would try to reach him sooner.

Anna Ruth rose at ten o'clock and went about

her work, limping now and then, and not comprehending the disaster which made their modest and unimportant household so conspicuous. She could not grasp her mother's absence from the kitchen, or the presence of Miss Randall who moved briskly about, speaking a kind word here, a positive word there.

'Sit down, Anna Ruth,' she commanded, seeing Anna Ruth's unsteady gait. 'I'll do everything that needs to be done. Mrs. Barrington said she would send in the dinner. Miss Dennison will see to your clothes. I wouldn't open the front shutters, Mr. Keller, or do business. You put the store in order — that'll help you get hold of yourself. Yes, I know the destruction is serious, but, if it hadn't been for the cat, you and Anna Ruth, too, might be dead. Mr. Line's here to see you, Mr. Keller.'

'Mr. Line?' Keller spoke as though he could not imagine what business Line had with him.

'To make arrangements for the funeral.'

Keller grew pale. Line stood before him — there was no postponing the dreadful necessity. Anna Ruth sat on one side of the kitchen table with Miss Randall holding her hand, and on the other Keller gazed at Line as though he were an executioner. There were a dozen people in the

store contemplating the ruin wrought by Beauty, and Line closed the door in answer to Miss Randall's nod.

'Something nice, I suppose, Mr. Keller?'

'Nice? What is to be nice?'

'The casket and the other arrangements for the obsequies.' Line liked elegant words. He liked everything to be elegant, but never in his long experience had he been able to direct a funeral which could by any stretch of the imagination be called elegant.

'The obsequies?' repeated Keller.

'The funeral. She'll have to be buried,' explained Miss Randall gently. 'There'll have to be a funeral and a grave.'

Keller looked distraught. 'It will be very expensive.'

Knowing the sad shifts and anxieties of the poor, Miss Randall regarded him, not with contempt, but with sympathy.

'Mr. Line will be as reasonable as he can.'

'I'm always that, thank you, Miss Randall,' said Line gratefully. 'It will cost, the whole thing with three cars' — he paused, he always paused a little here, and caught his breath — 'with three cars, one hundred dollars.'

'Three cars!' Keller spoke vaguely. 'Cars'

meant to him, for the instant, railroad coaches — Line must be losing his mind. '*Cars?*'

'Automobiles. The family, the minister, the bearers. Possibly a few friends.'

Keller shook his head in answer to 'a few friends.' He exclaimed, 'A hundred dollars! How is it spent?'

'If there's to be a robe, that will be twenty-five.' Line was now a physician, kindly but firmly letting the worst be known.

'A robe!'

'Your daughter says the deceased has no suitable dress. I could give you something for twenty, but there would be no lace.'

'Lace!' said Keller, frowning. 'Lace!'

Anna Ruth clenched and unclenched her hand to keep time with a regular systole and diastole in her foot.

'We'll have lace,' she said hoarsely. 'I have twenty-five dollars.'

Keller looked at her, at once grateful and startled and suspicious.

'I earned it sewing for Miss Harriet, and saved it.'

'You'll take the hundred-dollar outfit, then?'

Keller groaned a 'yes.' His mind like Anna Ruth's found it hard to understand this calamity.

CHAPTER V

ANNA RUTH RIDES IN AN AUTOMOBILE

It was Monday when Arthur paid his call at the back gate, Wednesday when the deadly gas poured out of the stovepipe, and Friday evening at ten o'clock and not Thursday, as had been promised, when Roger came home. The last neighbor had left, but Hannah Kress was still looking out of her window and so was Mrs. Barrington out of hers, Hannah curiously, Mrs. Barrington with concern. Roger drove up in his roadster and went through the narrow tunnel, the broad shoulders of his fur coat touching on each side. How he hated the whole business! But he was not quite hardened enough to refuse all responsibility.

Anna Ruth sat at the table waiting, her chin in her clasped hands. There were dark circles under her eyes and her mouth was set and sunken. Miss Randall had said that it was best to let grief have its way and that she must not try to restrain her tears, but it was not grief alone which she was suppressing. It was strange that experi-

enced Miss Randall should not see that even grief for a mother, plus poisoning by coal gas, plus exhaustion, would not make any one look as Anna Ruth did. She avoided walking when she could, which was not hard, as the neighbors were determined to remove all burdens from her shoulders. It was amazing how kind they were; even Mrs. Carson, now that she knew the event could offer no possible lure to Carson, brought in fresh bread and cake. Never had Keller lived so well; he ate as he had not eaten in all his life. Anna Ruth ate nothing.

When Roger came in, Anna Ruth gazed at him intently. She had had another letter, and she had accumulated more knowledge of the ways of evil. Roger was regarded with suspicion everywhere, but he was supposed to have such powerful friends that arrest was unlikely. His face was flushed and he brought with him circumstantial evidence of the business attributed to him.

He looked first at the floor, then at the table, then at his father, and for a long time at the juncture of the pipe and the ceiling. By the time his gaze traveled to Anna Ruth, she had hidden her own eyes. It was a gesture of pure cowardice — Anna Ruth would admit that herself.

'I heard all about it,' announced Roger

quickly, as though he could not endure hearing about it again. 'I'm sorry.'

Keller looked at him with sudden hope.

'You could use your car,' he proposed eagerly. 'You could make several trips.'

'No!' replied Roger sharply. 'Not one trip will I make in my car. It isn't suitable.'

'Cars cost a great deal,' said Keller piteously. 'And the cat is responsible for two hundred dollars' loss in the store.'

'I'll pay the funeral,' offered Roger.

Anna Ruth looked up suddenly. It was a strange brother who did not sit down beside her and take her in his arms, but her face and her grief and the thought of what lay upstairs appalled him.

'Will you go up?' asked Anna Ruth.

'No.' Already Roger's hand was on the latch. 'No. I'll be here in good time in the morning. Have you clothes?' His eyes swept his sister's poor apparel.

'Yes,' answered Anna Ruth. 'Miss Harriet has made me a dress and I have a borrowed hat. Father has a band for his sleeve.'

Roger's hand pressed the latch, but it did not yield. He looked startled and took his hand away — some one was trying to come in. The

door opened and a stranger entered — at least, she seemed to Anna Ruth to be a stranger. Roger recognized her at once with amazement and rage; it was May Hurd in her long fur coat. She closed the door and stood with her back to it, staring at Roger, for whom she had been watching for two days. She was out of breath as though she had been running. For a moment in their opulence and dislike, they faced each other silently, then hoarsely, as if through tears, May put a question.

'I ask you, Roger, here in this house, will you marry me?'

'No,' said Roger with decision. 'I've told you a thousand times I won't marry you. I'll never, never marry you. There's no law in the United States can make a man marry against his will.'

This declaration was lost on May, who wished to be dramatic herself.

'I ask you once more will you marry me?'

'No,' said Roger.

'For the third and last time, will you marry me?'

'For the third and last time, no,' said Roger coolly. 'For the thousandth and last time, no.'

'After all I've done for you?'

'I don't know anything you've done for me.'

'After all I know about you.'

Roger was unperturbed.

'I know a few things about you.'

May faced swiftly round.

'You're straight, Anna Ruth! I once treated you mean, but you're straight. But you've got a crooked brother!'

Her face was deathly pale; in eye and voice was the hatred which is misery distilled to its most powerful essence.

'You'll be sorry for this, Roger!'

Roger opened the door.

'Cut it out!' he ordered roughly. He closed the door — it was as though he drove her off. Keller looked at him stupidly; Anna Ruth sat with her face hidden. When the echo of May's high heels had died away, Roger went also. He peered out of the tunnel and, seeing the coast clear, got into his car.

Anna Ruth and Miss Randall together folded Mrs. Keller's hands. She did not look in the least afraid, only quietly happy. Miss Harriet sent a wreath of green leaves with a little bunch of violets, and Line's hundred dollars included another wreath marked 'From the Family.' There was a bunch of carnations from the neighbors who crowded the rooms, wept at the

preacher's discourse, and, when the short procession left for the cemetery, quickly set the house in order. The Kellers looked fairly presentable, Keller with his gray suit cleaned, pressed, and adorned with crape, Anna Ruth in her black dress and hat, and Roger in his handsome coat. At least, thanks to Roger, the average of appearance was high. Roger sat with the driver and Anna Ruth in the rear with her father. Anna Ruth held her hand against her breast. There were red spots on her pale cheeks and she could feel the unremitting systole and diastole through her whole body. She did not hear the voice of the preacher, or see the casket lowered. Roger and her father helped her back into the car and, as soon as it started to move, turned in their places to look at her.

'What's the matter, Anna Roos?' Keller asked anxiously. 'Don't you go back on me too!' He meant to speak playfully, but his alarm for himself made his voice petulant. What would he do if Anna Ruth should go back on him?

In her corner Anna Ruth was occupied in some queer fashion in holding on to herself, as though, if she should take her attention away, she might precipitate a grave catastrophe, such as the bursting of her body. She felt alternating pain

and absence of pain. When she felt no pain, she felt nothing else, neither the beat of her pulse nor the motion of the car nor the process of her own thoughts.

Miss Randall was waiting when the car stopped. By this time vague impressions had crystallized in her mind; Anna Ruth had looked not merely tired and grief-smitten, she had looked ill, unnatural. Miss Randall had been at the curb for five minutes and she opened the door before Roger could jump out. Anna Ruth sat perfectly still, her hands folded, her eyes dull, her cheeks brilliant.

'What's the matter, Anna Ruth?' cried Miss Randall sharply.

Anna Ruth made no sign that she heard; at this instant existence was a blank.

'What's the matter?' asked Miss Randall again. 'Answer me!'

She took Anna Ruth's hand and found it burning through the black glove. Roger waited impatiently — Heaven grant there would be no more tragic scenes and no more disagreeable obligations! Feeling returned to Anna Ruth's body and consciousness to her mind.

'My foot!' she wept softly. 'My foot!'

Keller stepped out on his side of the car. His

store was in order, he could return to normal life and begin to recoup his dreadful losses.

'Wait!' said Miss Randall to the chauffeur. Shocked and anxious, she slipped round to Keller's place, and looked down at Anna Ruth's ankles between which there was an astonishing discrepancy in size. 'What have you done to yourself? What has happened?'

'I stepped on a nail.' Anna Ruth took pains with each word. 'On Monday.'

Roger and Keller stood still, Roger frowning, Keller open-mouthed. Hannah Kress came running.

'You drive us to the hospital,' ordered Miss Randall, slamming the door. She put her arm round Anna Ruth.

'Yes, ma'am,' said the chauffeur. 'I seen there was something wrong with the young lady.'

'The hospital!' protested Keller. 'I can't afford a hospital.'

'Shut up, Father,' said Roger in a low tone. 'If the kid's sick, the hospital's the place for her.'

Roger did not linger a second. Important business waited him at that same Lovers' Creek to which he had driven in the rain. Lovers' Creek was just as unattractive now on this cold March day.

'That's that!' said he as he swiftly turned the corner.

Keller went through the tunnel into the kitchen and thence into the store and opened the front windows. He could begin work at once, a customer might come any minute, and meanwhile it was pleasant to have peace and quiet.

With a vague recollection of something to be attended to, he went to the kitchen. Ah, the pipe! Line had told him that he had shoved it in and had urged him to get a longer section. He stepped on the table and examined it. He would not buy a longer section; that would be wicked extravagance; he would, however, insert a wedge, that might be a wise precaution. He found a piece of wood, a long pliable sliver which would allow no leakage and pushed it in, addressing the pipe meanwhile.

'You don't come out again, you.'

He opened the cupboard — food, food, food for a week! Could it be saved till it was all eaten? That would be economy to be grateful for! Anna Ruth would be back in a little while; they would examine her foot and dress it, and she would come home. They would treat her at the hospital for nothing; Miss Randall had done the right thing. When she came home they would have dinner.

Suddenly he had a delightful surprise. He saw a tiny shadow in the doorway, then a yellow body, slipping inquisitively round the jamb.

'Well, Beauty!' he said, succeeding in expressing himself facetiously at last. 'When you save my life again, don't do so much damage.'

CHAPTER VI

ANOTHER LETTER FOR ANNA RUTH

ANNA RUTH lay very still in a narrow bed, one of a dozen in a large room. It was Sunday afternoon toward sunset and the ward visitors had gone, except one who had come late and was allowed to remain for a few minutes. He was standing by Anna Ruth's bed.

Above Anna Ruth's leg was built a moundlike tent. She could look down over it past the corner of a screen to an open window which framed a blue sky and a long light feathery cloud, shaped like Cygnus, of which Miss Harriet had shown her a picture. If she turned her head, she could look past the other corner and see through another window the top of a young maple covered with delicate leaves. Beside the bed on a table stood a vase of yellow daffodils. Everything was white or soft blue or green or yellow.

Since she had been lifted into the bed, snow had fallen and high winds had blown and again snow had fallen; then after heavy rain came bright sunshine. In the farming country round

Middlebury the wheat-fields were living green. Along the creeks and between the fields the willows had turned yellow and then green, the alders misty gray and then green, the red maples crimson and then green, and all the tree-tops had thickened from balls of delicate filigree to enormous lacy bouquets. Cowslips and anemones and hepaticas and arbutus in the woods and forsythia and crocuses and Star-of-Bethlehem in the gardens were past, and violets and daffodils, hyacinths and tulips had succeeded them.

Anna Ruth had not been aware of missing the glorious procession since she was not acquainted with it or expectant of it; there were no flowers in Duke Street and she never had time to wander far away. When she should be able to sit up, a new experience awaited her. The hospital stood at the western edge of Middlebury, and from it one could see across ten miles of open country to the low range of mountains. To-day the mountains changed color from hour to hour, they were first rose and then purple as the shadows of the shifting clouds fell upon them.

This was the first day that Anna Ruth had really noticed the blue sky or the little leaves, or even the daffodils. Now unconscious, now delirious, now half awake and moaning with pain,

she had been the guerdon of a hot warfare; on one side doctors and nurses and sharp instruments and her own youth, on the other undernourishment and exhaustion and infection and the shock of grief. To look at her one would not guess that doctors and nurses and her youth had won.

She realized that some one was standing by the bed. Doctors and nurses and Miss Randall had come and gone and she felt no responsibility for them; though she knew that Miss Harriet sat beside her and it was pleasant to have her, she did not open her eyes. But her father was different; she must speak to him and make him feel at home. She looked up and tried to smile and he seemed to fade away. She looked again and he was still there. Suddenly she saw him plainly, the pathetic black band on his arm. He was rubbing his hands together as if he were distressed. She meant to say loudly and cheerfully, 'Well, Father, how are you to-day?' but she could not make him or even herself hear what she thought was a shout. Keller was speaking in a queer, wailing tone; he seemed to be only restless hands and a sharp voice.

'What will I do if they take off your foot, Anna Roos?'

Anna Ruth's heart began to beat rapidly and

her cheeks turned pink. She must silence him, his question seemed queerly indecent.

'Well, Father —'

'What will I do if they take off your foot, Anna Roos? Who will cook? Who will stand in the store? How will I get along? Tell me that!'

'Well, Father —'

Somewhere near at hand there was the crash of a screen overturned by a quick and angry motion, then a speeding figure, then a hand on Keller's shoulder.

'I didn't think she was awake!' explained Keller. 'I was talking to myself like. But if it has to be that her foot —' Keller's voice dwindled to nothingness as he was escorted down the ward and through the door into the hall.

Anna Ruth was aware of confusion, then of peace, of a bending figure, then a hand on her wrist. Whispers ran from bed to bed.

'Idiot!'

'Shame on him!'

An Irish voice advised, 'Put him out!'

'I don't believe she was awake,' said a nurse softly. 'Now quiet, everybody.'

In the middle of Sunday night, Anna Ruth woke. Nights were hideous, then she had attached to her a burning, throbbing weight which

made her restless and at the same time kept her from moving. Now she had little pain, she was astonished at her comfort. Some one had asked about taking off her foot — what an absurd question when it was already off and she was happy to be rid of it!

The same person had asked how he would get along, who would cook and who would stand in the store. Why, everything would be as it had been; her mother would cook and she would stand in the store. Why, pray tell, was she lying here idle?

Suddenly memory resumed activity — there had been bad weather, a dreary, dreary rain falling on piles of dirty snow, and Arthur Wynne had been here. But there was something afterwards, a great wind and an appalling event, something that happened at night — she remembered what it was now, she remembered everything up to the point where she had ridden in an automobile beside her father, then she had seemed to fall asleep. She fell asleep now, mercifully. These meditations had occupied several confused hours and it was almost daylight.

On Monday afternoon she asked a question. She was very tired; the dressing of whatever was down below the left side of her body took a long

time, and she had sleep to make up from the night before. It had been decided that when she asked about her mother, she should be told the exact truth. But she understood about her mother, her question concerned their plans for her foot, which she realized this morning was still attached to her, but she refrained from asking for the same reason that she covered her eyes when Roger entered the kitchen; she dreaded to hear as she then dreaded to see.

'How did I get to the hospital?'

'Miss Randall brought you.'

'When?'

'After your mother was buried. When you came back from the cemetery she saw that something was wrong.'

Over this Anna Ruth pondered. A night passed and part of another day. The same nurse went back and forth, stopping now to adjust her covers, now to say a smiling word.

'What day is to-day?' asked Anna Ruth.

'Thursday,' answered the nurse promptly. 'Thursday the tenth.'

'Is it April?' Amazed, Anna Ruth saw the color of the sky.

'No, child, it's May. Don't you see the leaves? Think of all the violets and daffies you've had!'

'Oh!' said Anna Ruth. Violets and daffies — she had had no such articles. May — could it be May?

Two days and two nights passed and still the question was not asked. On Thursday the doctor came as usual with his attendant nurses and their basins and rubber sheet and towels and cotton and gauze. Usually Anna Ruth lay with her eyes closed until the nurse gave her a little whiff from something held to her nose, then she felt very drowsy and everything grew deathly still. To-day she looked down and saw the toes of her amazing and incredible foot.

'We won't have to hurt you much longer,' promised the doctor cheerfully.

'Thank you.' Anna Ruth was always grateful, always patient. Having seen her foot, she understood what the doctor meant when he said he would not have to hurt her much longer. That foot was not worth hurting or saving. Her ideas of surgery were vague at best; she did not even wonder why they still bothered with a foot they were going to cut off.

The nurse, coming with her supper, set down the tray quickly.

'What's the matter?'

Anna Ruth had determined to know the worst.

She must make plans, people used crutches or wooden legs. Some had complicated iron legs. And she had promised her twenty-five dollars to Keller!

'Are you in pain?' The nurse herself grew pale. 'Tell me!'

'Will they take off my foot?' stammered Anna Ruth at last.

The nurse gave an hysterical snort.

'No! You're getting well. What put that idea into your head?'

'I heard some one say something.' Anna Ruth flushed crimson.

'Nonsense! To-morrow you're going to sit up and look out the window, think of that! See, there's your foot!'

'I've seen it,' said Anna Ruth grimly. 'I've seen it uncovered.'

'It looks queer, but it'll be as good as ever. On Sunday Miss Randall's coming to stay a long while.'

'And my father, is he coming?' Anna Ruth's voice was simply inquiring. It took a good deal of effort to make it simply inquiring.

'Not this Sunday. Next Sunday, perhaps; then you can take a few steps with a crutch.'

On Sunday Miss Randall sat by Anna Ruth's

bed, looking at her tenderly. A patient became thereafter her child. She brought flowers and in the pocket of her uniform a book and something else. There had been delirious murmurings to which she believed this object was the key.

'I've been sitting up,' boasted Anna Ruth, her happy eyes on Miss Randall's kind eyes, her hand pressed by Miss Randall's.

'How did it go?'

'Pretty well. I looked out for miles and miles. It made me almost too happy and I had to lie down. I didn't know you could see mountains from here.'

'As soon as you're able, we'll go to the mountain. Your brother asked me how you were getting on.'

'Did he?' Anna Ruth's heart leaped. 'I suppose he was here and I couldn't see anybody, or else I've forgotten.'

'Yes,' said Miss Randall vaguely. Again Roger had been on the verge of arrest and again had been saved. She began quickly to tell neighborhood news.

'Miss Dennison's coming this week.'

Anna Ruth grew crimson, then pale. She lifted her free hand to her cheek — Arthur had kissed her, but he was gone.

'Hannah Kress is still going about seeking what she may devour. Azalea has been greatly concerned about you, and Gangeware has been praying for you. Mr. Line sent his respects and so did Captain Gross. I'm going to bring Mrs. Barrington to see you. It's too far for her to walk.'

'I suppose Mr. Barrington isn't working.'

'No, Freddy as usual is only talking.'

Miss Randall rose and put her hand into her pocket. The sun was declining and a clear light from the window shone on Anna Ruth's bed. Before long there would be supper, then the routine of preparation for the night. Anna Ruth should have her letter so that she could read it before dark. There was a clear, beautiful, happy light in Miss Randall's face, like the benign sunset; there had been the same light in Carson's when he gave her the letter.

'The postman handed me this for you, Anna Ruth.'

A flame leaped to Anna Ruth's eyes, then sank, and a dagger seemed to pierce her heart. 'Your brother — the police.' No letters now! She could not endure a letter when she was already laid low.

'A letter?'

'From far away.' The flame leaped back. Miss Randall's voice seemed to come from far away. 'Would you like me to open the envelope for you?'

'From far away?' repeated Anna Ruth.

'From South America.'

'Yes,' said Anna Ruth. 'Please. Thank you.'

Miss Randall laid the letter in her hands and stooped and kissed her.

'Good-bye for to-day.'

Anna Ruth lifted both her arms; for the first time in her life certain words which filled her heart were shaped by her lips.

'I love you,' she said as though loving were a very solemn thing.

'I love you,' avowed Miss Randall, practically, her face glowing. 'Wait till you get round again; we're going to jitney it over the whole county.'

Anna Ruth looked at the ceiling and at the sky and round the quiet ward. A screen still partly enveloped the bed, and by sliding a little she could hide from her kindly ward-mates. She lay for a long time with her arms folded on her breast. There was occasionally the rustle of a changed position or the turned leaf of a book or the checked breath of pain. From without came

the sound of bird songs. Her thoughts were for a long time bitter.

'I might have kissed him back. I might have put my arms round his neck. And he's gone!'

Suddenly the sunshine grew golden as though a lamp were lighted for her convenience, and happiness flooded her breast. She drew out the letter, there were a dozen sheets of thin paper, written on one side. She saw, 'My dear Anna Ruth,' and other wonderful words, 'El Misti, Mollendo'; she read fragments of sentences, 'the brilliant sky,' 'the grim and glorious mountains,' 'awake all night and every night'; then she could read no more. She put the letter into the pocket of her hospital gown — this was enough happiness for one day.

She saw, not the familiar sky, but towering mountains, glowing in orange and purple, laced by lava flows, changed to nameless colors by the burning sun. She thought of her mother — her mother had gone to just such a glorious place. After a while she saw the Southern Cross above her head. Arthur would be awake and she would keep vigil with him. The stars seemed to sing, and their tune was a familiar one, 'Love never faileth, love never faileth.'

But she kept no vigil; presently she ate what

they brought her and let herself be made ready for sleep, which was, for the first time in weeks, sound, childlike, uninterrupted by grotesque dreams and fancies.

PART III

CHAPTER I

ANNA RUTH WRITES A LETTER

ANNA RUTH was sealing a letter. She had made a change in the furniture since her return from the hospital, and the washstand which once served as a bureau for Juliet now served as a desk for her. Upon it stood her library, consisting of her mother's Bible and the two volumes of 'The Conquest of Peru,' and also a bottle of ink with a pen beside it. In the drawer lay a box of pale pink writing-paper, now minus one sheet and one envelope. On the wall above the stand was pinned a small map of South America with a circle drawn round Arequipa. The document which had inspired this literary and geographic exhibition was not there, it lay against Anna Ruth's throbbing heart.

Vague music came in the window, but Anna Ruth paid no heed. This was Memorial Day and there was a procession from the square to the cemetery. The band had only four tunes to which it could march, 'America,' and 'The Star-Spangled Banner,' 'Safe in the Arms of Jesus,' and 'Nearer, My God, to Thee.' It played the

religious numbers going out and the patriotic numbers coming in; Anna Ruth could have told if she listened that it was going out.

She sat sidewise and a little awkwardly because of her foot and because the washstand was not intended to serve as a desk. Her foot was greatly improved; by midsummer she would be able to forget that she had injured it. She hopped round on her crutch, traveling with the agility of a squirrel. To-day she was going with Miss Randall to Lovers' Creek. Miss Randall no longer sat at the street corners in agony; she sailed over hill and dale, her sensations those of a bird. Sometimes, when she was alone, she cried 'Whoop!' as she coasted down a hill. It was an inexpressible relief to one who tended the sick and poor from morning till night, who one day closed the eyes of a father of little children and the next accompanied to the asylum a young mother who had lost her mind.

Anna Ruth had revised and copied her letter four times before she put the final draft on pink paper. Her handwriting was beautiful, but high-school graduate though she was, her powers of composition were meager. She told about her mother's death, but said nothing about her own misfortune, since Arthur was indirectly respon-

sible. Arthur's responsibility was in a queer way a mitigation. She answered all his remarks carefully. 'Arequipa must certainly be a wonderful place.' 'You certainly must have rushing rivers in the wet season.' 'I certainly' — this Anna Ruth erased and then restored; the Earth, seeking to signal to Mars, found itself embarrassed. The same embarrassment prompted her to postpone her answer for a month. 'I certainly would like to see a volcano. I never saw a volcano.' No, Anna Ruth, nor a river, nor a city, nor a real mountain, nor much of anything but Duke Street, Middlebury.

The letter would have puzzled a reader who knew nothing about the writer — was it the deliberate product of indifference, or the awkward product of tenderness? Anna Ruth sealed the envelope and pressed it to her cheek. The clock struck three. Miss Randall was due. She wrote in her smooth hand, 'Mr. Arthur Wynne, c/o Harvard Observatory, Arequipa, Peru,' and hopped downstairs. Keller looked at her with concern; even though she recovered so rapidly, he could not feel sure that she would really be well.

'You won't have many customers,' said Anna Ruth. 'But are you sure you can get along?'

'Of course I can get along,' answered Keller. 'Haven't I got along?'

Anna Ruth was sitting on the back porch when Miss Randall came in through the tunnel to say that she was ready. The Health Board had required Keller to clean his yard and the back porch was not quite so unpleasant as it had been. Miss Randall's cheeks were rosy and her eyes bright; she had a beauty far deeper than any mere beauty of feature.

'Ready?'

'Yes.'

Miss Randall looked in through the back window of the store at Keller sitting on his box. She had assumed command over him as she did over many inhabitants of Duke Street. She was the only person before whom Freddy Barrington was absolutely silent and she could calm poor confused Burling Crane with a word. He followed her like a dog, as though he found assurance in her company.

'We won't be back till dark, remember, Mr. Keller.'

'All right.' Keller grinned; apparently he found in his newspaper some source of satisfaction.

A pang rent the soul of Anna Ruth. If they

were to be gone till dark, should she not offer to furnish a share of the lunch? Bananas and sardines of which they had plenty — were not these picnic fare? Would not Miss Randall expect her to provide all the refreshments in return for transportation? Frequently in sudden flashes of memory she recalled the events of her sickness, and as in a mirage saw Keller standing by her bed rubbing his frightened hands.

'I can't pay anything. I haven't anything. I had such awful, awful expense. The cat did fearful damage.'

What would he say to donating bananas and sardines for a picnic? But she ventured bravely.

'I ought to take some lunch.'

'I have the lunch packed,' answered Miss Randall briskly. 'Everything. Where's your coat?'

Anna Ruth fetched the coat which she had long ago inherited from Juliet who had worn it three winters.

'Any errands?' asked Miss Randall casually, as though she did not see the pink envelope.

'The post-office.' Anna Ruth aimed at indifference, but did not achieve it. 'I'd like to mail a letter.'

Miss Randall did not say, 'Here's a letter box,

drop it in'; she turned the car out of her way to the post-office. There she did not even say, 'Let me mail it'; she watched Anna Ruth step out somewhat painfully and hop up the steps. She liked people to be happy and to be happy in their own way, and unlike Miss Harriet she would no more have interfered with certain matters than she would have undertaken to perform a delicate surgical operation. She knew without experience that Anna Ruth wanted to hobble up the steps and herself inquire about postage and with her own hand be sure that the letter was mailed.

'See!' said she in triumph when the car started smoothly, and 'Hurrah!' when they had turned round.

In the quiet town shops were closed and streets almost deserted. They drove past the campus and Anna Ruth gazed at the observatory. The Arequipa Observatory was doubtless far larger and its telescope much more powerful. She would have liked to talk about South America, but she did not know how to introduce the subject here on a street in Middlebury. To speak about the ancient Peruvians would have seemed pedantic, since Miss Randall was probably unacquainted with their interesting history. In a

few hours her letter would start, traveling first on a train, then on a steamer, then —

'Watch how she takes the hill!' cried Miss Randall, as though her car were a Pierce-Arrow.

'Fine!' answered Anna Ruth. A train, then a steamer — when she reached home she would trace that wonderful progress. Now she would look and listen.

They reached the top of the long hill and Miss Randall stopped her bubbling engine. Before them lay five miles of open country; beyond, crossing their path at right angles, the low hills, in the center of the range a deep cleft.

'That's where we go.'

Anna Ruth sat still, her hands folded, her cheeks pale. She did not cry as she had when she first looked through the hospital window upon the world, but she held her breath. Then she had been overwhelmed as by some forbidden thing, now the world was hers. She said nothing and neither did Miss Randall. The occupants of a passing car looked at them, surmising exhaustion of their steed.

'You can stand poverty and misery and wickedness for a while if you can get away from them like this,' said Miss Randall.

They ran slowly along the smooth road, toward a pleasant village.

'The corn's coming up and the wheat's turning color.'

Anna Ruth listened with respect, scarcely knowing one crop from another. She caught the sweet odor of syringa blossoms, she felt the delicious air on her cheek, and a new spirit stirred within her. How dreadful to spend one's days in Duke Street behind a counter! A whiff from the store soiled the clean air, she seemed to look for an instant into the indescribable deeps of the cellar.

Beyond the pleasant village, wheat and corn gave place to apples. Here, too, was the faint sound of music; this band also played 'Safe in the Arms of Jesus,' and the plaintive air seemed like a breath from the hills. Set on the first slope there was another village, tree-embowered and beautified by slender church spires; farther on, beyond a large orchard, the growth of oak and hickory began. Wild azalea was still in bloom, and laurel was in its glory. Miss Randall named all the flowers; she was in an excited mood as though bound on an adventure. Suddenly she stopped the car and shut off the engine.

'Listen!'

Hearing for the first time the sound of falling water, Anna Ruth wept. The bed of the stream was rocky, the gradient considerable, and she could see boulders and foam through the trees. Miss Randall started her car. The hills rose steeply on each side and the roar of the stream, echoing from one to the other, was louder than the whirr of the engine. Under the pines rhododendrons overhung the brown water.

'Can't we stay here?' begged Anna Ruth.

'This is where we're going to stay.'

Miss Randall drove to the side of the road and stepped out.

'You wait here and I'll be right back.'

Taking the picnic basket from between Anna Ruth's feet, she crossed the road, descended the bank, and walking on stepping-stones reached a flat rock in midstream. There she deposited her basket and returned.

'Now step down, Anna Ruth! Careful!'

Out of the car, Anna Ruth saw the enveloping hills, the giant trees, the rocks, the stream, the fresh green undergrowth.

'Can I get out to that rock?'

'If you're careful.'

She planted her crutch where she was told and was safely on the first rock, again stepped out and

again was safe. Another step and she was on the roomy platform in midstream.

'Sit down and make yourself at home.' Miss Randall helped her to a seat on the cushion.

'You're going to sit down too?'

'Not right away.'

Miss Randall went back and forth to the bank, bringing a blanket from the car and armfuls of small dry sticks from the ground.

'Are you going to build a fire?'

'I am.'

'On this rock?'

'On this rock. The wind will carry the smoke away. This is a real picnic.'

Miss Randall vanished up the road and Anna Ruth was alone, surrounded by hills and trees and the mellifluous stream. Her heart seemed to burst a band which had hitherto kept it from growing, then sadness overwhelmed her.

'One oughtn't to stay in one place. One ought to see things and have things.'

Miss Randall brought more sticks and laid the fire between two stones. She took off her shoes and stockings and dabbled her feet in the stream. She turned and lifted a pointing finger; from among the rhododendrons the shy head of a deer was thrust out. They sat enchanted into im-

mobility until a jay uttered a warning scream and the deer lifted his head and saw them. At once he crashed away, up the almost perpendicular hillside. The jay scolded and Miss Randall mocked him in return. She desisted and a crested pheasant tiptoed to the stream.

When presently a car flashed by at reckless speed, she glanced at Anna Ruth, whose head was turned; then she looked away before Anna Ruth looked back.

'This is the old road to Medford,' she explained. 'It's very bad, but shorter than the concrete.'

The car was gone, the sound of bubbling water again filled the ear, but for a moment the brightness of the day was dimmed. Anna Ruth thought of Roger, but Roger's car was gray. She had not seen him since their mother died. Miss Randall thought of Roger also — this was Roger, she was certain, in a new car.

The afternoon waned and Miss Randall lit the fire. The odor of coffee filled the ravine, sandwiches appeared and eggs, transformed by some alchemy into what Miss Randall called 'deviled' eggs. There were strawberries — Anna Ruth had had few strawberries; and there was cream — she had never tasted cream.

The young moon hung overhead. The sky was clear azure, then rosy, then pale green, then dark unfathomable blue. The moon brightened and sank until it was caught in the lacy branches of a pine. Miss Randall grew silent and Anna Ruth thought of her letter. It was speeding on its way — would that she could speed with it! Duke Street was a prison; panic shook her at the thought of returning.

'Do you ever hear from your sister?' asked Miss Randall suddenly. The Kellers had been passing through her mind, Mrs. Keller, Keller, Roger, Juliet.

'No,' said Anna Ruth.

'Have you written to her?'

'Oh, yes! But she doesn't answer. I suppose she isn't allowed.'

'You've never been to see her?'

'Oh, no! I don't believe they'd let me see her.'

'Surely they wouldn't turn her own sister away! Now we must go.'

Anna Ruth stepped to the bank and into the car. She had been so happy, but happiness ended in pain. This glory, and Juliet shut up! Perhaps she wanted to come home and had no money. Perhaps they wouldn't let her have letters or

send letters. Juliet had never known that there was anything like this in the world.

Miss Randall drove silently and carefully.

'I have to readjust my mind to pellets and alcohol rubs and so forth,' she explained as they crept down the last hill.

At nine o'clock they reached Duke Street. Keller was sitting on his box, Beauty within reach of his hand; the two looked like conspirators. Keller had had a long afternoon and to pass the time he had prowled round the house. He had looked at Anna Ruth's books, studying the inscription, and also at the map of South America. What did the girl want with a map of South America? If she liked pictures, there were many free calendars. He wondered whether she had any more money and whether he could after all trust Anna Ruth.

Anna Ruth looked at him intently. There was color in her cheeks and the shine of the fire in her eyes and a smell of the woods about her which suggested happiness and freedom.

'Father,' she said, 'when I'm well, I think I ought to go and find Juliet.'

'Find Juliet!' Keller almost screamed. 'Find Juliet! Why, you goose, leave Juliet where she is. Why should you find her?'

'She may want to come back.'

'She was never any good to us. She went of her own free will.'

'Won't you give me the money to go to see her?'

'No,' said Keller. 'Of course not. Not a penny. Why, Anna Roos, what ails you?'

Anna Ruth went slowly upstairs. She reckoned with ample latitude that she could expect an answer to her letter by September. Meanwhile, she must get well and she must earn money. Miss Harriet would give her work to do. She saw Juliet's little face, pale between the masses of dark hair, and Juliet's eyes which seemed to express desperation.

CHAPTER II

ANNA RUTH TAKES A JOURNEY

ANNA RUTH rose early; having once made up her mind, she sped like an arrow to her goal. The milkman had not started on his rounds, the roosters in the neighborhood had not begun to crow, Keller had not stirred in his sleep. Dressing with a catlike quietness, she crept out her bedroom window to the slanting roof of the kitchen, stood still until her eyes grew accustomed to the night, stepped to the roof of the porch, then climbed down the pillar to which hung portions of an ancient lattice. The train for New York left at 4.55 and it was now 4.30. She wore her coat and hat and she had money in her pocket for her fare both ways and for Juliet's fare one way. Her bed was made, the house was in order, there was food in the larder, and on the kitchen table a note reading, 'I have earned some money and I'm going to see Juliet. I'll be home tonight.'

The morning was raw; Keller had last night prophesied bad weather. Anna Ruth tried not to breathe; the Health Board had not repeated its

order and the yard was in its old state. She was going to see Juliet and to bring her home, and she forgot the letters she had written which had vanished as though they had been weighted with lead and dropped into the sea; she ignored the fact that she had never bought a ticket, or been in a train, or seen a city. Longing and unfounded self-reproach emboldened her; she should have gone long since and demanded to see Juliet.

Shivering with excitement, she took the familiar path to the rear gate. Holland's garage and his great house, showing dimly through the leafless shrubbery, were dark, so was Miss Harriet's house. The house where Arthur had lived was dark also, and Anna Ruth's heart sank. Arthur had not written; September had passed and October, and this was the end of November, and she had heard nothing. She did not write again — that would have been an unthinkable boldness; nor did she inquire of Miss Harriet — that would have been unthinkable humiliation.

In Mr. Line's house a faint light burned; one thing in the world was certain — everybody must die, and Mr. Line was always prepared to receive the dead.

The ticket agent looked up dully, hating the early train and the travelers who insisted upon

taking it. In the insufferably close station there was nothing to see except a large picture of a terminal in St. Louis which had hung there thirty years. Anna Ruth made herself very small in her corner. If Keller had heard her, he would have plenty of time to read her note and come after her. But she climbed unpursued aboard the train.

The car was almost empty and she selected a seat near the middle and sat far in the corner. When the train started, she grew pale; to plan a trip is one thing, to be finally committed to it another. The windows were dark and she seemed to be shooting through space. After a while she saw a drop on the pane, then another. She had no umbrella, and it would be unpleasant to present herself at the institution where Juliet was, all dripping and forlorn.

The portly conductor looked at her kindly and curiously.

'Well, Missy, where are you going?'

'To New York,' answered Anna Ruth bravely.

'By yourself?'

'Yes, sir.'

He punched her ticket and passed on and after a long while returned. Mist and steam still covered the windows, but the outer world was gray

and not solid black. He sat down in front of her, looking at her sharply. Anna Ruth's good points appeared after the first glance.

'Going to stay long?'

'No, I'm coming back to-night.'

'Know anything about New York?'

'No,' confessed Anna Ruth. 'Nothing.'

'Where are you going?'

'To Brooklyn.'

'Know anybody there?'

'My sister.'

'Where does she live?'

'On Clinton Street.'

'Know how to get there?'

'No,' confessed Anna Ruth.

In the conductor's astonishment, Anna Ruth realized the magnitude of her undertaking.

'Want me to write directions for you?'

'Oh, please!'

The conductor took a card from his pocket and wrote in large letters as one might for a child, 'Go to the Subway, take Bridge train, go to Brooklyn, and get off at City Hall.'

'Don't ask questions of anybody but men in uniform in the station and policemen outside. You oughtn't to have to ask any questions. When you go out of the Subway in Brooklyn,

take note of where you are so you can find it again.'

'I expect to bring my sister back,' volunteered Anna Ruth.

'Is she younger than you?'

'No.'

'Is she sick?'

'No, she's a Sister there.'

'Oh,' said the conductor vaguely. 'A Catholic Sister?'

'Yes,' confessed Anna Ruth with a blush. 'But I hope she'll come home.'

'I hope she will.' The conductor looked doubtful. 'Here's a time-table; that's the last train. You watch out and don't talk to strangers.'

'I won't,' promised Anna Ruth.

She could see a dim landscape which was interesting because it was new. There were few passengers; the gloomy day was one to spend in the cheerfulness of home. She felt a hollowness within her; she had forgotten breakfast. Eight o'clock passed and nine and she grew faint. At ten o'clock the conductor looked at her in passing.

'What's the matter, Sister?'

'I forgot to eat.'

'I can get you a sandwich at the next station.'

Revived by food, Anna Ruth began to take note of her surroundings. They had reached the flat Jersey country with its long barren stretches and here and there a dingy village. It seemed to Anna Ruth that she had been on the way for an immeasurable time. The train must be late; it could not be possible that it was still only the middle of the morning. They passed through larger towns, then cities, and her heart throbbed with fear and excitement. There was to be a tunnel, she knew that much. The train paused, then ran into darkness, and she felt a pressure in her head. The train stopped and the conductor helped her down.

'Go upstairs and look for the Subway sign.'

'Thank you.'

'And hold on to your money and your ticket.'

'I will,' promised Anna Ruth earnestly.

She saw a vast lofty room with hundreds of people moving about, but she did not linger. There was the sign and here the ticket-seller. She descended and followed other human beings into a brightly lighted train and sat holding her worn purse in both hands. She was near the door where stood one of the men in uniform to whom her friend had recommended her and to him she shouted her destination.

The train went on and on; she gazed interested and amazed at strange-looking people and back again at the conductor. Each time he shook his head. At last he bade her depart, and the train whizzed away leaving her bereft. Climbing a stairway, she found herself in a city street with high buildings and felt as though she had been set down on the moon. Fortunately a blue uniform met her eye.

'I want to go to Saint Margaret's Convent.'

'Right you are,' said the jovial officer. 'Eight blocks down.'

'When I go back, do I take the train here?'

'Over there.' The officer pointed with his stick.

Anna Ruth walked rapidly away. Remembering Juliet sitting in the parlor of the Sisters' House in Middlebury, pale and downcast, she began to run and came breathless to the door of a brownstone building. It had no identifying sign, but she went up the steps and rang the bell. To her astonishment, the door was not opened, but a little sliding panel was moved back.

'What do you wish?' asked a woman's voice.

'I wish to see Juliet Keller.' Already Anna Ruth's heart had begun to sink.

'There's no such person here.'

'Oh, but there is! She may have another name, but her real name is Juliet Keller. I must see her!' Anna Ruth began to cry, and a passer-by stood still to look. The eyes within saw his curious gaze.

'Come inside and I'll inquire.'

Anna Ruth stepped bravely into the vestibule. The porter's stout, voluminously dressed body filled the space between the wall and the opened inner door. Within was intense quiet, broken in a moment by a faint murmur of speech. The porter stepped inside, and another woman in black with hands folded asked Anna Ruth's business.

'I want to see my sister, Juliet Keller. I've written and written, and she doesn't answer.'

'She's not permitted to answer.'

Before what seemed a monstrous wrong, Anna Ruth was for a moment silent.

'Why isn't she allowed to answer?'

'She's taken a vow not to communicate with her family. She's a religious. She came of her own free will.'

'You mean I can't see her?'

'That's what I mean.' The voice was kind.

'Won't you tell her I'm here?'

'She's not permitted to know that you're here.

She wouldn't wish to see you. She's happy because she serves God. She prays for you.' The Sister lifted her clear eyes. 'You might find peace and happiness here also.'

Desperately alarmed, Anna Ruth stepped backward.

'Oh, no!' she said. 'Oh, no!' She put her hand on the knob of the outer door and, finding that it turned easily, stepped out. 'Oh, no!' As if mocking her excitement, the door closed quietly.

Back at the entrance to the Subway, she trembled. Though a clock in a neighboring window pointed to half-past twelve and her train did not leave New York until four, she was terrified lest she might be late. She must get home; there might be a letter from Arthur. Duke Street seemed beautiful, home attractive. The sun was struggling through the fog and clouds, but she did not heed. Plunging down, she found the few minutes' wait for the train terrifying and its progress when she was at last aboard snail-like.

In the station she sighed with relief. Here she had ascended from the Middlebury train, here she must descend. Her eyes grew wider; she would have something to describe to Arthur if he wrote to her again. June, July, August, Septem-

ber, October, November — surely he would write soon! She paced the floor and sat in the waiting-room and looked in the windows of the shops in the arcade and glanced into the restaurant, her eyes constantly returning to the clock. She realized after a while that she was hungry, and she drank a cup of coffee at the lunch counter and had sandwiches wrapped to take with her; since there was no necessity of paying Juliet's fare she had plenty of money. She waited at the gate for half an hour and cried a little when she sank into a seat. Like the mouse in the fable she stole back from the great world. Another thick veil hid Juliet; this, alas! would not be lifted.

At home Keller had gazed aghast at Anna Ruth's note. She had disobeyed him, and how sly she had been! All these weeks and months, saying nothing, she had gone on quietly to attain her end. He thought of her books and her map — was there something vague and underhand connected with these also? He would go upstairs when trade slackened and look at them again. It was not right for children to have secrets from their parents.

He needed to do no investigating, a kindly fate put full information into his hands. At nine o'clock he heard a footstep on the porch, and

to his astonishment beheld the dapper form of Carson there instead of in the store. Carson ran a serious risk in deviating thus under Mrs. Carson's eye.

'Anna Ruth!' he called softly. 'Anna Ruth!'

When Keller confronted him, he grew pale, then red.

'Anna Roos is away for the day.'

Carson could not conceal the letter already held out.

'Here's a letter for her.'

'I'll take it.'

Distrusting Carson as well as Anna Ruth, Keller received it into his hand and with quick-wittedness unlike him placed it on the shelf above the stove, as though it were no concern of his.

'She'll get it when she comes back.'

'Yes,' said Carson, half-satisfied.

Keller returned to the store and went about his business, but as soon as he was free he took down the letter and opened it. He did this without compunction, Anna Ruth was his property. Its address amazed him almost out of his wits; it was 'My darling Anna Ruth.' He turned it over and over and found the signature, 'Arthur.'

'Arthur,' said he aloud, pronouncing it 'Arsur.' 'Arsur,' said he again and again. 'Arsur. Arsur who?'

He began to read; it was a long letter, partly descriptive and partly ardently affectionate. The writer — why, Arthur Wynne, of course! — had been on an excursion to a city where there had once been golden plates on a wall. He wanted to show this place to Anna Ruth. He could show her, he said, even the holes where the plates had been fastened. He seemed to be much moved by affection. It was hideous, he said, to think of the years passing without Anna Ruth. He despaired of being able to fetch her as soon as he would like to have her; he hinted vaguely, but unmistakably, at the possibility of her coming to him.

'In Heaven's name!' cried Keller, and tried to read the letter straight through.

His astonishment and fright kept him from doing anything in an orderly way. He read the last sheet, the middle, then the first. 'My darling Anna Ruth,' indeed! Anna Ruth was his Anna Ruth. If she was gone, who would cook his meals? Who would clerk in the store without salary? Who would help him fend off starvation? He would have to read the letter several times before he was sure that this outrageous proposition could be made in sincerity. He rose like a drunken man, and, to restore himself to a normal

state, began to move jars and cans on his shelves.

In the afternoon he put the letter in one of the drawers under the counter together with other waste paper. He relocked it securely and many times thereafter looked at the key. He would keep the letter until he had mastered its amazing contents. How narrowly he had escaped a calamity!

At nine o'clock he went to the station to meet Anna Ruth, not to welcome her or to escort her home, but to be sure she had returned. He walked down the street, past the Garrett House. Once he had hated to see Roger in affluence, but now he had given him up. Roger was at this moment stepping out of his new black car and he looked at him absently. A member of the constabulary force, apparently troubled about a defect in his motor-cycle, crouched down on the opposite curb. Accidentally May Hurd was passing and she stared with hungry eyes, but the hunger was for revenge and no longer for love. She saw the officer and smiled — he was not studying the hub of his wheel; he was looking between the spokes at Roger. Living in the jail, May knew much that the average citizen did not.

Tired in soul and body, Anna Ruth stepped heavily from the train.

'I won't hope for a letter,' she said with determination. 'Then I won't be disappointed.' 'And then, too,' whispered her heart, 'if you don't expect it, a letter may come.'

She was surprised to see her father — doubtless he had hastened to reproach her. But he smiled his toothless smile.

'I guess you couldn't persuade her.'

'No,' said Anna Ruth wearily. 'I couldn't persuade her.' She had once said, 'I have my father and mother and sister and brother' — now she had only Keller. She walked with him soberly and followed him through the tunnel into the kitchen. There her eyes sped round and round — if there had been a letter, it would have been placed in sight. It was useless to ask, but she asked.

'Was there any mail for me?'

'No,' said Keller, as if surprised. 'Were you expecting mail?'

'No,' answered Anna Ruth honestly.

She slipped wearily out of her coat.

'They wouldn't even let me see her. They said she had taken a vow and was happy. She doesn't want to see me or anybody.'

'I believe that's the truth,' said Keller consolingly. Children must, after all, try experi-

ments and parents must comfort them when they failed. 'There's some pie left.'

Anna Ruth shook her head.

'I'm not hungry.' She opened her poor pocket-book, and took five dollars from the five dollars and sixty cents which it contained. 'There, Father, perhaps that will help pay the bills.'

'That's a good girl,' said Keller. Perhaps, after all, he could be sure of Anna Ruth.

CHAPTER III

LOVERS' CREEK

ANNA RUTH sewed until she could sew no longer, then she rose and folded her work. On a hot August afternoon she was hemming coarse sheets whose purchase Keller allowed when no sheets were left in the house. Keller bemoaned the departed day of cotton flour-bags, he fancied that whole wardrobes and household outfits could be made from them.

Anna Ruth had been scrubbing and she held her needle with difficulty. Her good looks could be discerned now by merely a passing glance; her forehead was very white, her bronze curls very thick, her eyes very blue, and her cheeks — Miss Randall saw to this — very pink. With companionship and a little diversion Anna Ruth had bloomed, but when she sat alone and sewed, her mouth was not happy, but set and sober, and her eyes were sad.

The kitchen was the same, the store was the same, the yard was the same. Anna Ruth admired Miss Harriet's way of living, but she had no means herself for living in that fashion. The

only change in the furnishings was a one-plate gas-burner, bought at second hand, Keller having become convinced of the wastefulness of burning coal in summer.

Anna Ruth walked into the store and looked down at her father as she had looked a thousand times. The air was heavy with unpleasant odors; flies buzzed; Beauty, who was growing old, appeared an unsuitable occupant of a store where food was handled.

'I'm going out, Father.'

'All right,' said Keller. 'Where?'

'Perhaps to Miss Harriet's.'

'All right,' said he. 'You can.'

He was impatient for her to go. Next to reading Miss Harriet's paper, he found his chief pleasure in reading Anna Ruth's letters, of which he had three. The pleasure was that of looking into an abyss and knowing that he was safe. It was queer how the letters came when she was not only out of the store, but out of the house, and it was also very fortunate; he would have hated to quarrel with her. That she should agree to the extraordinary plans of this ardent youth was, of course, out of the question, but she might wish to agree. There was her present to Azalea and her wild trip to Brooklyn; he was not yet quite sure

of her. He knew that the young man would not come home soon, because he said, 'If you'll come back with me, I'll come home in the spring'; and this she knew nothing of. The young man seemed greatly disappointed because he received no answer.

When the sound of Anna Ruth's footsteps died away, he opened the drawer under the cash drawer and took out the three thick envelopes and studied them, chewing happily on his broom-straw. He knew the contents by heart; he liked to read about the snow-capped mountains and the rushing streams and the Indians and the llamas, and especially about the city which had golden plates on its temple walls, even though he did not believe this statement to be true.

Having locked up the letters, he walked into the kitchen. In spite of his careful wedging, the pipe had slipped out again, and he must remember to push it in when the stove was lighted in the fall. But that was still far away; it was amazing and delightful how one could save by doing without a coal stove. One saved both fuel and food, since with only one burner one could have little variety. He drew in his meager body, away from his clothes; it pleased him to feel his spareness. Anna Ruth, he thought, was a little too plump,

but that one must allow in youth. Returning to the stove, he sat on his box, determined to sleep; he often had pleasant naps in mid-afternoon. Beauty jumped to his lap and slept also.

Anna Ruth went slowly down the yard, walking with her eyes almost closed in spite of the broken boardwalk. To her it was not August and daylight; it was March and night, and the air was thick and raw; she felt it on her hot face, and heard a voice calling, 'Anna Ruth; is it you, Anna Ruth?' The sound made her dizzy with longing and unhappiness.

She had gone many times to Miss Harriet's when the longing grew intolerable and there had received a stone for bread. Miss Harriet's fears had revived; she guessed where Arthur had spent the last minutes of his visit, and she read Anna Ruth as easily as a child's primer. Anna Ruth in her gayety and bloom was transparent. Arthur seemed to have no feminine acquaintances, and it was not too late for compassion and youthful susceptibility to ruin him. He inquired for the Kellers, and Miss Harriet ignored his questions or answered them vaguely. Not with any help of hers should he ally himself with a Keller!

She sat as usual on warm afternoons, sewing in her arbor, still handsome with her smooth skin

and her crown of dark hair. It was a hideous waste that she should have sat all these years sewing in Duke Street with no real companionship. She looked at Anna Ruth and smiled; then her eyes narrowed. Anna Ruth's bloom had come suddenly; Miss Harriet saw not merely delicacy of skin and blueness of eye, but a fine grace of motion. She was sorry for her; there was really nothing ahead for Anna Ruth.

'Come and sit down.'

Anna Ruth leaned against a post, her hands clasped behind her, in a child's attitude.

'I'm going to walk.'

'What have you been doing?'

'Oh, working as usual. I've been riding with Miss Randall, too.'

Miss Harriet's eyelids trembled; a queer selfish love resented Anna Ruth's friendliness for Miss Randall.

'Miss Harriet, do you ever hear from Arthur?'

'Arthur?' repeated Miss Harriet. The spirit which animated her pretense was curiously compounded; in it was love of Arthur's father and hatred of Mrs. Holland, and love of Arthur and jealousy of Anna Ruth.

'I mean Arthur Wynne.' Anna Ruth's face was crimson.

'Oh, yes!' Repenting, Miss Harriet would have given anything to call back the moment in which she had lost a precious thing. 'He's well and busy.' She sincerely tried to say, 'He asked for you especially,' but she could not frame the words. She said again, 'Do sit down. I have some ginger ale on the ice.'

'No, thank you,' said Anna Ruth. 'I need to walk.' She departed with dignity and self-possession.

'Your geraniums are beautiful,' she called. 'I've never seen a brighter color.'

She went down the alley, then back into Duke Street, which was deserted in the warm afternoon. Miss Harriet had hurt her profoundly. She wished that she might see Miss Randall; Miss Randall was not as bright as Miss Harriet, but she was kind.

Hearing a voice calling, she looked sharply round. May Hurd, stout and bare-armed and bare-necked, was following her, and she stood still and waited, her mind filled instantly with misgivings. She had not spoken to May or seen her since her dramatic appearance in the kitchen.

'Hullo,' said May lightly. 'How are you?'

'I'm well.'

'Your foot all right?'

'Oh, yes.'

May caught up with her and spoke in a low tone.

'Your brother's going to get into trouble.'

The color faded from Anna Ruth's face. Could May have written her the warning letters? But that was not like May; she was direct, outspoken.

'He's coming back this evening from Pittsburgh with a lot of bonded stuff and they're going to catch him along Lovers' Creek.' Anna Ruth remembered instantly the black car and her vague feeling of uneasiness. 'If you could get there before dark, you might warn him.'

Anna Ruth trembled. 'How could I get there?'

'Go up the Lincoln Highway. Some one will give you a ride, and you get off at Underwood's and walk across.'

'Underwood's?'

'It's a store with a gas station at the top of the hill. There are signs all round, and there's a road leading to the right. Nothing'll hurt you. On the Medford Road above the crossroad there's an old stone house. A girl lives there. You tell her to tell Roger not to come along the creek. Then you go back to the highway, and come home. It's easy.'

'Will you go with me?' faltered Anna Ruth.

'Not on your life!' answered May sullenly. 'I'm a fool to help him this much. I'm not doing it for him, but for you.'

Instantly, in her fashion, thinking of neither hat nor sunshade, Anna Ruth started westward. She saw Roger, not prosperous and haughty and a law breaker, but a little boy, sitting beside her at the table. Time cast a glamour over the past; it seemed to Anna Ruth that their childhood together had been beautiful. He was her beloved brother and he was in danger.

She walked rapidly through the town, across the campus, giving for once no thought to the observatory, through the residence section, and into the country. A car passed filled with rough boys who, without stopping, invited her to join them. On the highway there was continual traffic and a score of cars sailed by without heeding her; a girl without hat or luggage could be bound on no long journey. She had gone half a mile before a car stopped, driven by a woman with a man sitting beside her. A trunk on the back showed them to be travelers.

'Want a ride?'

'Thank you.' Anna Ruth scrambled in.

'Going far?'

'To the top of the mountain.'

'"The top of the mountain" sounds lonely.' The man turned and took in all Anna Ruth's good points.

'But it isn't.' Anna Ruth blushed for her glibness. 'There's a store there and a gas station.'

Her dignity prevented further questions. The car sped on, through Milltown and Laurel, then began to climb. Farms gave place to apple land and apple land to virgin woods. The road ran along the side of the hill, to the left a steep ascent, to the right little valleys filled with tall trees. There was a fresh odor of leaves and rich soil and the air was cool. Anna Ruth felt the delightful change and beheld the beautiful landscape with half of her mind; the other half was paralyzed, she could not remember what May had told her to do. She heard fragments of conversation in front of her. This was a famous road, it had been an Indian trail, pioneers had gone west on it, and Lee's forces had traveled it.

'Is this your destination?' Both her companions turned to regard her.

With her foot on the step, Anna Ruth controlled her growing panic.

'Yes. Thank you for the ride.'

'Are you in any trouble?' asked the lady kindly.

The gentle voice charmed and terrified Anna Ruth. Was she going to cry? Sometimes she did, at glimpses of other customs, other ways of living, other habits of the soul.

'No,' she said steadily. 'I'm all right.'

'You're not afraid of anything?'

'No. Will you tell me what time it is?'

'It's half-past three.'

'Thank you.'

Anna Ruth backed away and turned to the right. The car stood still as if it watched.

At first small fields lay on each side, then the forest received her. The road was rough; it was plain that no car traveled it, and it was doubtful whether even a buggy could get through, but Anna Ruth pressed on bravely, as if on one breath. Then she stood still and listened, panting. There was a dead tree beside her and its branches wove a strange pattern against the sky. The sky looked not deep and unfathomable, but hard. Buzzards rose lazily as though disturbed in some monstrous feast. She stood bewildered, believing herself for an instant in a dream. She would wake and be in her bed or in the kitchen, where sometimes on hot summer afternoons nod-

ding at her work she had hallucinations. But this was not a dream, it was dreadful reality; she was alone in the woods, going to warn Roger of danger and Roger was a law-breaker and a criminal.

The cawing of a crow frightened her almost out of her wits; then she recovered and walked on. It was cool here on the high land and in the shadow; with a shudder she remembered that night would come. It must be three or four miles to the Medford Road, and there would be three or four back. She would walk until she had counted a thousand, keeping time with the rhythm of her steps, if so irregular progress could have rhythm, then she would start another thousand. She believed that she had come five miles when she had come but two. She had heard of labyrinths in which one went round and round — was she caught in such a place? The town-dweller's sense of strangeness in the woods overwhelmed her; the woods seemed sinister, full of undefined terrors. She was constantly impelled to stop and listen, but did not dare for fear of what she might hear.

The sound of an automobile horn halted her at last. The light above was bright; May had said the raid was not to be made until dark, but might there not be a mistake? If the officers

caught Roger, would they take him by force? Might there be shooting? The horn was blown again, and it was mercifully farther away instead of nearer. She stepped out on the Medford Road. Only a little distance away ran the beautiful stream; she remembered the leaping deer and the fire and the crested pheasant and the young moon, as though they belonged to another existence. The house, May said, was above the juncture of the crossroad and the Medford Road, that must be toward the left. She came upon it after walking a few minutes, built of stone, shabby and sinister in the thick woods, and, seeing no sign of life, went round to the back.

A young woman, robust and handsome, and vaguely resembling May Hurd, sat idly on the step, staring into space. She turned her head quickly and a bright color came into her cheeks and the shine of amazement into her black eyes. Frightened and breathless, Anna Ruth put out her hand to the pillar of the rickety porch.

'I'm to tell you —' she began, and paused.

'You're to tell me what?'

'That Roger Keller is not to go along Lovers' Creek.'

The girl frowned, her eyes brightened; as if outraged, she straightened her shoulders.

'Who are you?'

'I'm Roger's sister.'

'You don't look like him.'

'But I'm his sister.'

'Who gave you such a message?'

'May Hurd. They're to watch for him along Lovers' Creek.'

'Tell me that again.'

'He's not to go along Lovers' Creek. They're going to watch for him there.'

The girl looked Anna Ruth up and down, her frown deepening. It was true that shabby Anna Ruth did not resemble Roger.

'How did you get here?'

'I came across from the Lincoln Highway.'

'Alone?'

'Yes.'

'All the way?'

'Yes!' Anna Ruth's voice played her a trick, her answer was a shriek.

The girl was not inclined to mercy. 'May Hurd said what?'

'That he was not to go along Lovers' Creek.'

'Does May Hurd like your brother?'

'No.' Anna Ruth believed she answered honestly. 'No. She did it for me.' She saw the stranger smile.

'Are you going back the way you came?'

'Yes.'

'It's almost six o'clock. You'd better go if you mean to get out of the woods before dark.' Her hard heart was touched by Anna Ruth's youth and helplessness and paleness. 'Do you want some bread?'

'Thank you, yes.' Anna Ruth began to cry. 'You'll surely tell him?'

'Oh, yes, I'll tell him!'

The girl rose and stood magnificent in height and posture. When Anna Ruth had gone munching her bread, she resumed her place on the step and sat staring ahead, her face red, then white. A middle-aged man, handsome in her own fashion, came in from the woods at the back and she addressed him without looking up.

'A young girl was here who said she was Roger's sister. She said she came from May Hurd to warn him not to go along the creek.'

'May Hurd? That was his sweetheart?'

'Yes. Once.'

'Is she friendly to him now?'

'This girl says not.'

'Think it's a trap?'

'Of course! That's easy. They're watching for him on the other road.'

'Going to tell him?'

Smiling, the girl answered in May's own language.

'Not on your life am I going to tell him!'

'Perhaps you'd better let him decide.'

'Not on your life! I'll decide.'

Halfway to the Lincoln Highway in the thick woods, Anna Ruth's muscles, which a year ago had been so inflamed and sore, began to ache intolerably and she began to limp. She sat down to rest and when she rose a shadow filled the narrow way. She could not rest again. She heard rustlings, now above her, now beside her. Remembering stories of wild-cats which lay on branches and dropped on the heads of travelers, she stepped warily in the middle of the road, aiming, not for Underwood's, but for the dead tree; if she could get that far, she would believe that she could get out.

The dead tree came in view before the last gleam faded; not now sinister in aspect, but kind. The highway was near, but her limp lessened her speed. The road grew dim; she began to despair. Would she have to spend the night here? How did one spend the night in the woods? Did one lie down as one was under a tree? The earth was a hard bed.

Seeing at last a dim light she tried to run. There was no house on this road, it must be the light of the store. She came out into the open and saw palely winding before her the ribbon of concrete and plodded on out of the way of cars in the shadow at the side. Occasionally a woman looked back startled, but, believing her eyes mistaken, did not stop.

At last she overtook a conveyance instead of being overtaken. An oil-tank had been halted while its driver examined a tire, and he had just proved it sound when he saw the shadowy figure of Anna Ruth.

'Where are you going?'

'To Middlebury.'

'Traveling alone?'

'Yes.'

'Want a ride?'

'Yes, thank you.'

'Climb up.'

With instinctive confidence in a man who worked, Anna Ruth did as she was told and sank back against the hard seat which seemed cushioned. If she was questioned, she must invent answers. Fortunately, the stranger was occupied with more important affairs than the business of a stray girl on the highway; he had a girl of his

own about whom he longed to talk. He talked like Barrington, as though speech were the chief necessity of life and he had been long denied it. Anna Ruth put in an occasional yes and no. They passed through Laurel and Milltown to the accompaniment of his eulogy and saw at last the lights of Middlebury.

'Where'll you get out?'

'At the edge of town.'

'You live there?'

Anna Ruth managed a 'yes.' She thanked him earnestly and he whistled as he started his car.

'Oh!' moaned Anna Ruth, as she tried to walk. 'Oh!'

Limbering after a few steps, she went on, past the pretty houses, past the college, past the Garrett House. Middlebury was quiet, as usual on a summer evening. She would soon be home, home, in bed. She wished that she need not tell her father where she had been, but now she had power neither to deceive nor to invent.

Middlebury was not, after all, so quiet; there were rapid steps behind her, then a loud voice saying an amazing thing.

'Those dreadful Kellers!'

She stopped, pressing her hand to her mouth. People were hurrying toward Duke Street and

she hurried with them. Her own block was filled from house to house, and she turned into the alley and approached from the rear. But the alley was filled also. There was a light in Mr. Line's house and in the little building behind it. She made a wider détour and came from above to her own gate. Miss Harriet was standing in her yard looking toward Mr. Line's; she could see her tall white figure. She felt the familiar boards of the step, the familiar latch of the screen door, and saw Keller in his accustomed place. He was not reading Miss Harriet's paper, nor even chewing a broomstraw; he was staring at the floor.

'Father!' cried Anna Ruth. 'What's the matter?'

Keller looked up. His poor face could express tragedy, but it could still better express relief.

'Where were you, Anna Roos?'

Exhausted, Anna Ruth leaned on the counter.

'I went for a walk and met May Hurd, and she told me that Roger was going to be caught by the officers. I went to warn him. What has happened on our street?'

Keller blinked. His mind was fixed on Anna Ruth, not on Roger, and he essayed a joke.

'I thought you'd gone to South America.'

'To South America?' repeated Anna Ruth faintly.

'You have a map,' Keller reminded her quickly, feeling the earth reel beneath him. 'Don't you?'

'Yes,' answered Anna Ruth, heart and body in agony. 'What has happened on our street?'

'Did you see Roger?'

'No. I left word for him.'

'Well, he didn't get it.' Keller seemed, as ever, to smile.

'How do you know?'

'They caught Roger.' He told the news brutally, though he did not mean to be brutal; it was a fact which had little interest for him. 'Roger's down at Line's. It's all over with him. They wanted me to go down to look at him and I said no, I wouldn't go down.'

For the second time the Keller family, so shrinking, so inconspicuous, so unimportant, furnished excitement for the community. May had spoken the truth and Roger, unwarned, apprehended, and resisting arrest, now lay near the home he had forsaken, in a lowlier and even less pleasant place, the little morgue of Mr. Line. Late in the evening, Anna Ruth went thither escorted by Miss Randall. Roger looked boyish

and promising, and over him Anna Ruth said, weeping, the one thing which could be said.

'He never had anything that was nice or pleasant and he was young and he wanted nice pleasant things.'

Anna Ruth herself felt old.

Keller had no objection to riding to a funeral for which he did not have to bear the expense. Roger's estate met all costs and the loss occasioned by the closing of the store and furnished enough beside to make Keller remember him without rancor. There was no trial of the officer who shot him, and it was well for Roger's sake that no public inquiry was made. Holland vanished for a few weeks, but his absences were frequent and for him no one in authority inquired. The departure of his kin did not seem strange to Keller; he believed that he would live on and on, even after Anna Ruth was gone.

When the funeral was over, he spent a little of Roger's money in extravagance. He went to the post-office and rented a box, giving orders that all mail for himself and his family should be deposited there. Anna Ruth's terrifying absence was responsible for this provision, which proved to be unnecessary, since letters came no more. Carson's suspicions were strengthened, and con-

science and interest in Anna Ruth urged him to ask whether she had received her mail. He tried once to speak to her, but, looking back over his shoulder, desisted in fear. Sometimes he thought of Hannah Kress's expedient, but of that, too, he was afraid.

CHAPTER IV

ANNA RUTH FINDS A CONFIDANT

AGAIN Anna Ruth was sewing. It was no use to try to read, because there were too many interruptions in the early evening, and she did not like to sit and think, because too many old things came to mind: her mother's bent, frightened aspect, Roger's still, white look, the blank front of the great building in Brooklyn behind which Juliet had imprisoned herself. She preferred even the talk of Freddy Barrington to her own thoughts.

At half-past six Miss Randall opened the door and let in the raw, chill March air. She stepped briskly, her cheeks glowing, and, with a little grimace at Anna Ruth, walked toward the store.

'I'm going to take Anna Ruth to the movies.'

Keller looked round grinning; he had just asked a cent a pound above the market price for raisins and the customer made no objection. He was perfectly willing for Miss Randall to take Anna Ruth, since she paid the admission; Miss Randall was a friend to them.

'All right. I guess I can get along.'

'I guess you can,' said Miss Randall to herself. Poor and pitiful as he was, she despised Keller.

'Come on,' said she. 'Get your hat and coat.'

Anna Ruth had already rolled up her sewing; she had been at the movies twice with Miss Randall, and there had wept, had marveled, had laughed, until her body ached. To one who had only once been more than a dozen miles away from Middlebury, the movies revealed much.

Arm in arm the two went down the street to the Garrett House and turned the corner. The mist was thick, the lights had halos round them, and the trees wore a spectral look. Few pedestrians were abroad. Dazzling lights invited to the Photoplay, place of wonder, where for a small consideration one could step from night and darkness and sit warmed and dry and look into the houses of the great and watch the rolling sea and wander through cities and see beasts fighting in jungles.

Miss Randall paid for the tickets, and they made their way in in the dark. The first picture had been shown and advertisements were being thrown on the screen. Even advertisements interested Anna Ruth, and she uttered a long sigh as she sank into the comfortable chair — here her own thoughts did not trouble her.

The chief picture recounted the humorous adventures of a rich youth masquerading as a bellboy and in love with the beautiful daughter of his stern employer. The ordinary course of human events would have required three lifetimes for the experiences which this youth had in three days. Pursued as a thief, and pursuing thieves through endless corridors of vast hotels, having his pocket picked of valuable bonds, serving as a waiter in a restaurant and emptying his tray on the heads of elderly ladies, fleeing in high-powered automobiles and rushing at last into the arms of his bobbed-haired love, he was, to one person in the audience, at least, medicine and tonic and a source of rapture. Anna Ruth was no longer weary in mind and body, and she looked forward to something in life — she could come to the movies again.

She dried her eyes as new advertisements appeared and prepared herself for the educational film.

'Did you like it?' asked Miss Randall, who loved the crowd and the laughter and the sense of being taken out of herself.

'Yes,' gasped Anna Ruth. 'I never' — she stopped suddenly and sat with her lips parted. 'I never —'

'You never what?'

Anna Ruth's eyes were fixed upon the screen. Miss Randall turned and looked — the title said, 'The Wonders of Peru.' She remembered Anna Ruth's letter and believed that she had had no other. She felt her move away as though she wished to avoid the distraction of even a touching elbow.

'Journey Inland,' and beneath it an enchanted word, 'Mollendo' — that was the port at which Arthur landed! Anna Ruth saw a long line of barren hills rising abruptly from a narrow beach, and far out in the harbor a steamer. She leaned forward, yearning, breathless, her eyes gleaming. Peru! Mollendo! It could not be true!

She could have gazed for an hour, but in an instant the scene changed and her eyes had to adjust themselves to a close view of passengers being disembarked from a motor-boat. It was not a dignified landing, they were lifted in a stout armchair from the rocking craft forty feet into the air. The motor-boat did not wait patiently under the derrick; the chair had to take perilous advantage of a brief pause. Somewhere Anna Ruth had read about a mighty billow which came driving in — here was that mighty billow! The audience laughed at the disconcerted travelers,

but there was to be no laughter from Anna Ruth; she was a photographic plate which received and registered impressions, but had no power to express joy or fright or longing.

'The Railroad — One Hundred Miles of Excitement.' The train ran along the beach between the brown and gray hills and the blue and sparkling sea and then turned upward. The passengers were tilted back as they rose zigzagging into the clouds. The train vanished into the roof of mist; then there was a view of a green and fertile valley far beneath, an oasis sunk into a rocky desert. In a garden at the little station, to which water was brought in an aqueduct, grew cotton and cane, figs and roses.

'Sand Dunes at La Joya' — Arthur's letter had told of sand dunes at La Joya. Perfectly crescent-shaped, some of them a hundred feet in length, they moved across the desert at the rate of two inches a day, marking the years like the sun. Anna Ruth read the description on the screen.

'When this identical dune was five miles away, Inca runners were carrying messages from Cuzco to the sea.'

'Ah!' sighed Anna Ruth.

There showed another word of enchantment —

Cachendo. It was from Cachendo that one saw the giant mountains. If this view would only linger! Anna Ruth was in Miss Harriet's arbor hearing wonderful words in a quiet voice.

This is Pichu Pichu. Its faces are too steep for snow, but lower down every gully is white with desert sands blown up by the winds.

The giants were before her — purplish black El Misti, to his right Pichu Pichu with scarred sides, to his left Chachani with towering pinnacles. Still farther away were two other enormous masses. She could have looked forever. All rich and splendid colors were here, contrasted with gleaming snow and the blackness of shadow in the depths where night was settling down.

Then — oh, poor, happy Anna Ruth! 'Next station Arequipa!' She kept her aching eyes open with an effort. Churches and convents, thick-walled low houses, green gardens, and back of all the dark bulk of El Misti — they were visible and they vanished. A cathedral, churches and arcades, flat roofs in Oriental fashion with people sitting idly, brightly clad Indians in the streets, long-necked llamas — they were gone.

Anna Ruth blinked and opened her burning eyes — it was well that she did. Before her stood the plain words, 'Harvard Observatory. From

this point, eight thousand feet above the sea, Harvard astronomers patrol the Southern sky.' A Harvard astronomer, recognized by but one citizen of the town where he was born, was patrolling the Southern sky, standing before the telescope. The photograph was not intended to be a portrait of the young man; he was there merely to serve as a measure for the other objects in the room and to add human interest to the picture.

Anna Ruth uttered a little whimper and Miss Randall glanced sharply round. She had an impulse to take her hand, but thought better of it. When she looked back at the screen, the Harvard astronomer was gone, unrecognized by her. She believed that tears were running down Anna Ruth's cheeks.

'Journey to Cuzco' — 'Ah!' whispered Anna Ruth — 'The train ascends to Crucero Alto, 14,688 feet above sea level.'

The train wound round Mount Chachani, Arequipa was seen and lost, irrigated fields were left behind, mightier and more solemn mountains came into view, the traveler looked down upon the clouds. 'Vicuñas' — Anna Ruth had heard of vicuñas. 'Alpacas' — she smiled wanly at the strange beasts. At one station gayly dressed

Indians had assembled for a dance; everywhere were women diligently at work, spinning, weaving, tending their herds, harvesting the crops.

'The train descends, then ascends through a hundred miles of cultivated land.' Oxen dragged wooden ploughs, there were strange brown faces, strange animals, cataracts, overwhelming prospects of glacier, crag, and peak, a stream from a hot spring which boiled and bubbled, cooled by water from a glacier, then thick-walled Cuzco.

'This is the sacred city of the sun, capital of a vast empire. Up and down this street monarchs have passed, some to execution, some to the throne; victorious armies have hastened to celebration, defeated armies have retreated to destruction; countless millions of gold have been carried to adorn palace and church, only to be torn down and carried away by gamblers, brigands, and pirates.'

'Yes,' whispered Anna Ruth, to herself. 'I know all about it.'

Here was an enormous ruined fortification, here other terraced gardens, here a ruined city set astride a lofty ridge. Anna Ruth leaned forward; Arthur had spoken of journeys — perhaps he would appear again. But instead the bell-boy reappeared and Miss Randall rose.

'Tired?' said she lightly.

'A little,' confessed Anna Ruth.

Considerately, Miss Randall let Anna Ruth go home alone.

Keller was sitting in the kitchen because the store was cold. His friend and audience Freddy Barrington had for some reason — probably he was sleepy — gone home early. The shutters had been put up, but light shone through the glass door to tell late comers that the merchant waited to attend them. Keller sat chewing his broom-straw and thinking of the raisins.

'Well,' said he to Anna Ruth. 'Did you enjoy yourself?' His tone said, 'Of course you didn't — why pretend?'

Anna Ruth hung her coat and hat in the closet, and came and sat opposite her father. Her face was pale and her deep eyes glowed. Freddy Barrington knew no more urgent necessity for speech.

'Father, the picture was about Peru.'

Keller covered his mouth with his hand.

'Yes, sir,' said he.

'Do you know anything about Peru?'

Keller had a look of awful guilt. Had she caught him and would she desert her father? Peru? He had read intimate, first-hand descrip-

tions of that wonderful country, he knew all about the snow-capped mountains and the deep gorges and the waterfalls and the llamas and the Harvard Observatory.

'No,' he said. 'Not a thing.'

'Well, I'll tell you,' said Anna Ruth. Anna Ruth fetched her map. She told how one reached Mollendo and what he saw on the way. She described El Misti and Pichu Pichu and Chachani. 'They've found lost cities buried so long that no one remembers them.' She described the hanging gardens and told about the llamas and the Indians in their bright ponchos. For the first time in her life she was tasting the joys of confiding; she spoke well, her cheeks glowed, her eyes shone. Keller took his hand away from his mouth, he was safe, safe enough to ask a question.

'I remember something about that country now,' he said, as if searching his memory. He saw in Arthur's letter amazing words which he had not believed: 'You can find the very holes on the wall from where they took the golden plates for Atahualpa's ransom.' 'Don't I remember something about gold?'

'Gold!' laughed Anna Ruth, her cheeks burning. 'Why, Father, gold was once as common as

iron is here with us. And silver — they shod the horses with silver.'

'Gold as common as iron!' mocked Keller. 'That's a little too much.' But his eyes glittered.

'Yes, it was,' insisted Anna Ruth. 'The Spaniards went down and captured the king and he paid them fifteen million dollars' worth of gold for a ransom. But they killed him anyhow.'

'Fifteen million dollars' worth of gold! In money?'

'In golden dishes and bowls and broad golden slabs. Their temples shone like the sun because of the gold.' Something strange and dreadful came suddenly into Anna Ruth's bright face, she looked like Keller when he sold the raisins for an extra cent a pound.

Keller saw her change of expression, and at last he trusted Anna Ruth. Anna Ruth was his child. He leaned forward; if the table had not been broad, he would have embraced her.

'They had a great sun made of gold, Father, fastened on the temple wall. They worshiped it.'

'I give them right,' said Keller in an idiom of the town. 'Where is this gold now? Could a person get any?'

'The Spaniards took it away, or the natives buried it to hide it.'

'Has any been dug up?'

'Some, I guess.'

'Who has the right to dig?'

'I don't know.' Anna Ruth's expression changed again; it became beautiful and tragic; her tongue, running on, reached at last its goal. 'Harvard University has an observatory there.'

Once more Keller covered his mouth with his hand — here again was danger!

'Is it so?'

'Arthur Wynne, Mrs. Holland's son, is there.'

Keller had wit enough to rise and cunning enough to yawn.

'I'm going to bed, Anna Roos.'

Anna Ruth continued to sit by the table, motionless, her hands clasped. She gazed across land and sea to a domed building on a high plateau and saw a tall figure looking through a telescope.

'I might have written when he didn't answer,' she said to herself. 'But now it's too late.'

Anna Ruth laid her head on her folded arms.

CHAPTER V

EVEN MONEY FOR A HALF-POUND

THE night was cold and Keller made a fire in the kitchen. Until now, in mid-November, he and Anna Ruth had managed without fire. The autumn had been warm, but winter came in an hour, and there was danger that goods might freeze indoors. The customers expressed discomfort and anxiety. Coal was dear, and with a severe winter there was no telling what would happen on Duke Street.

Freddy Barrington came early and stayed late. It grew harder each year for Mrs. Barrington to manage, now that the children had reached the stage when they ate heartily and wore out their clothes quickly and earned nothing. But Freddy did no work.

Hannah Kress lingered hopefully for fifteen minutes, and Miss Reilly presented her veiled face. Her veil was thicker, and only her eyes could be seen rolling hungrily behind it.

Beauty moved about restlessly, now in the kitchen, now in the store, now in the cellar. When at last Freddy Barrington started home,

he tried to slip out with him, but Keller, standing near the door, caught him with a quick turn of his foot. Beauty whined, but yielded to the inevitable. He continued, however, to prowl uneasily.

Anna Ruth sat in the kitchen sewing delicate lace on fine material for Miss Harriet. She was almost twenty-one years old now, and she was sure that youth was over. On the campus long ago the beautiful young voice used to sing, 'The oil is spent, the cruse is dry,' and she had never forgotten words or music; it was as though they had been prophetically imprinted on her mind. She had been thinking of them all the dreary day. She had ceased to think of 'Love never faileth,' she had ceased also to look at the stars or to name them to herself. They shone at this moment, gleaming and scintillating against the blue darkness, but she did not open door or window to look at them.

Keller sat opposite her, as he had sat when she had talked to him about Peru and as he had sat many times since. Again he chewed a broom-straw. How tiny he was, how shrunken, how little he had ever had! Anna Ruth believed that he liked money, but money he had never had. He had had no pleasures, no friendships, no rides

into the beautiful country, no moving pictures. His wife was dead, his children except one had forsaken him. Little as he gave expression to his sorrow, it must be that he felt sorrow. Realizing that she was all he had, Anna Ruth uttered words which had been forming in her breast.

'Father, I can do more sewing and perhaps we can save a little.'

Keller looked at her with rapture. He leaned forward, his elbows on the table, his eyes shining. His grizzled mustache bristled, his face burned, his frown drew forward the skin of his scalp in deep wrinkles. Anna Ruth had given him her confidence, he would return the compliment. No great talker of history or fiction exceeded Keller's sudden volubility or speed.

'You can make money in the store business, Anna Roos; that is, you can make enough not to starve. But you must watch out, Anna Roos, and you must be smart. You must keep a poor-looking business, in the first place, plain and not fancy. If you keep a fancy store, you must send things home and that eats up profits. If you keep a fancy store, you must wrap things up nice and that too eats up profits.

'You can't carry much green goods and make money. Green goods spoils too fast on you. You

lose a banana here and a half a head of cabbage there, and you can't eat things fast enough when they once begin to spoil.

'You must buy large, Anna Roos, and sell small, that's the great thing. A little at a time, sold at a good price. Poor people can't buy much; it's with them that you have your chance. You can add a penny here and a penny there and nobody will know any better. Pennies in time make nickels and nickels make dimes and dimes dollars; never forget that, Anna Roos, while you live. And always an even sum for a half-pound. If prunes are twenty-five cents, you ask thirteen or fourteen, because you have to handle a pound twice. That's only fair.

'It's a wonderful thing to have good ideas in your head, Anna Roos. The man that had the idea in his head to cut the groove in Ivory Soap saved millions for the company. I once heard of a man who took a cake of Ivory Soap and cut it in five pieces and sold them for a clothes-cleaner at twenty-five cents apiece. He got away with it too, Anna Roos. There was profit, twenty-five hundred per cent!'

He bent forward more and more earnestly.

'But you must keep all such secrets under your hat. They're no good if they're told; then every-

body has a chance to make money out of your ideas. If you once have money, Anna Roos, you can make it work for you and gather more to itself. Did you ever think of that, Anna Roos?'

'Never.'

'Why, that's how these rich people get their money, the people that live at the other end of town. Their fathers' and their grandfathers' money is working for them. You have a little and you invest it away and it works, day and night, day and night.'

Keller almost lay upon the table. Anna Ruth mourned for him — what a tragedy to have nothing to invest, if investment brought such pleasure!

'To get old, Anna Roos, and know you needn't worry, that money's working for you, working all the time, think of that!' Moisture appeared in the corners of Keller's mouth and ran down the wrinkles, graven deep at each side of his chin.

Anna Ruth turned her eyes away and folded her sewing.

'Come, Father, it's bedtime.'

Keller rose as she did, but continued to lean across the table, his strange weeping growing more copious.

'I tell you what you do. You work for Miss

Dennison, and when you have five dollars you bring it to me and I'll put it away in your name. Then you must never touch it, and in twenty years from now it will be ten dollars. Did you ever think of that?'

'I'd rather give it to you.' Afraid that he was going to point his remarks with hands laid upon her body, Anna Ruth moved away.

'You think of it,' advised Keller. 'In twenty years five dollars will grow to ten.'

'All right.' Anna Ruth promised carelessly and without the filial respect which had distinguished her 'I'll think of it. Now, it's bedtime.'

'Yes,' said Keller. 'It's just the same as golden dishes and bowls and golden suns. You can buy gold with it. For all the papers you have, there's gold somewhere and you own it.'

'Yes,' said Anna Ruth. 'Good-night, Father.'

Keller rose and locked the door at the foot of the steps behind his daughter. The room was comfortable as to temperature, but there was something else very uncomfortable about it. He sniffed the air and looked at the stovepipe. It seemed to project a little, but only a little. In a minute he would climb on the table and give it a shove, but first he would open the drawer in which he kept Anna Ruth's letters so fortunately

intercepted and, taking them from the mass of waste paper, read from them about the golden dishes and the golden plates. He hummed tunelessly as he did when he was very happy, and kicked Beauty out of his way as he walked.

'You were fed,' said he. 'Clear out and shut up or I'll lock you in the cellar. You know how much you like that!'

He went round the counter and took the key from his pocket and looked stupidly at it, then down at the silly cat. Beauty would not be gainsaid; he would not clear out and he would not shut up, he stood on his hind legs, tearing frantically at Keller's knee. Keller felt his claws through the worn material. He meant to shriek out, 'Will you tear my clothes!' and give Beauty a more violent shove, but he suddenly felt very happy, too happy to punish Beauty, as happy as though he had the inestimable riches about which Anna Ruth's young man wrote and about which Anna Ruth talked. But the ultimate bliss was not gold; it was sleep, and he meant to lie down on the floor, in the narrow space behind the counter. His descent was more rapid than he intended and his head touched a hard edge. But he felt no pain; the floor was at once mattress and pillow and he had never had so soft a bed.

PART IV

CHAPTER I

A SUMMONS FOR MR. LINE

ANNA RUTH sat on the edge of her bed, her arms folded, staring into the darkness, one half her mind inactive, the other active. The inactive portion contemplated with dull despair the wash-stand with its three books, its inkstand and pen, all invisible to the eye; the active half considered Keller's fluent address. To get old, Keller had said, and to have money working for you, and not to have to worry. To have money, if you had nothing else.

'I have my father and mother and Juliet and Roger and Miss Harriet and May Hurd and Arthur' — thus had Anna Ruth once proudly listed her possessions. Now she had only her father. But to have money, to feel safe against the hideous menace of poverty! How changed one's feeling toward poor food and ragged clothes and deprivations of all kinds, if one could expect eventual comfort! Money, laid up in the bank, working day and night! With an obscure sense of shame, Anna Ruth closed her eyes as though some one might see them shine, and covered her

cheeks as though some one might see them burn.

She shut out also the washstand with its meager library. She had never rehung the map after she had shown it to her father, and she thought no more of Arthur patrolling the sky. The active part of her mind kept on reflecting — if one had money, if one had money! Money worked; five dollars in time amounted to ten and ten to twenty and — Anna Ruth removed one hand from her cheek and unconsciously made a strange gesture, as of slipping a coin from finger to finger.

After a long time she sniffed the air, but did not stir from her place. She was still thinking of money, not of paper and silver and copper, but of golden money, of which she had never seen even a five-dollar piece. She thought of golden plates and a golden sun and golden dishes and bowls. There was still buried gold, and she wondered, with Keller, who had the right to dig.

She sniffed the air again, expanding her nostrils like an animal, then she stood up and moved her tongue round her mouth and licked her lips. Her lips felt dry and the roof of her mouth rough. An old association was established; she shrank from sharp pain in her foot and knife-like agony in her leg, and instantly she rose staggering and lifted

the window. The pipe must be out! To-morrow she would attend to it permanently herself. Keller could not be trusted. She had begun to be irritable and she thought of him with impatience.

Filling her lungs with fresh air, she ran down the steps to stop the leakage at its source. She called toward Keller's room as she went, 'Father! the pipe's out!' and flung herself against the door at the foot of the stairs. To her amazement it did not yield. Was Keller here?

'Father!' she called. 'Open the door! The pipe's out!'

When still Keller did not answer, she leaped up the stairs. Keller's room was empty; she swept her hand quickly across the bed. He must have locked himself into the store, but nothing serious could have happened in this little while. She did not rush to the window and call for help; the ignominy of fresh publicity she could not endure; she would effect a rescue herself. All one needed for recovery was plenty of fresh air. Her mother had had, the doctor said, a complicating weakness of the heart.

Crossing her own room on a run, she stepped out on the roof of the kitchen. The stars still shone brightly, a meteor trailed across the sky. Once the sight would have thrilled her to the

soul, but she was done with the stars, whether fixed or movable or shooting. The old lattice held for this descent, but it would never hold for another and a breaking cross-piece let her down with a thud.

Breaking a window proved easy, and so did unlocking the sash and creeping in and climbing the table. The wind entered with her and she was safe. Heaven send that Keller had not locked the door into the kitchen! Why had he locked the door into the stairway?

Keller had not locked the kitchen door; he feared no advance from that quarter; but only that Anna Ruth might come down the steps. She flung the door open, and Beauty rushed past like a missile from a cannon. Thus a rat, lingering through many minor disasters, leaves a ship which is doomed at last.

'Father!' called Anna Ruth into the darkness.

Unanswered, she lit a candle which the wind blew out at once.

'Father!' she cried in a sharper tone.

There was still no answer. Trembling, she lit the gas.

'Father!' she screamed. 'Father!' He had locked himself in, yet he was not here!

She peered over the counter, then stood biting

her fingers. Keller lay in a strange, huddled position, his face hidden, and it did not occur to her to fetch anybody but Line. She went through the kitchen and closed the door and ran down the street, past the dark and silent house of Miss Harriet, past the dark and empty house where Arthur had once lived. She did not ring Line's front bell, but called under his window.

He heard her instantly and put out the only night-capped head in Middlebury.

'What do you want?'

Anna Ruth assumed a queer anonymity.

'Mr. Keller up the street is — is sick.'

'Is that you, Annie Ruth?' Line's head was thrust out still farther. 'What's the matter?'

'The pipe!' screamed Anna Ruth with uncontrollable hysteria. 'The pipe's out!' She spoke as though the pipe were a fierce animal which periodically broke fetters and bars and escaped to ravage.

'My God!' cried Line, without meaning to be profane.

Line summoned the doctor and the doctor called the coroner, and Hannah Kress fetched herself at once. Hannah had grown old, her hair was grizzled, her mind was failing, and she had a

strange aspect, as of one who looks at a feast, but is no longer able to taste and digest. At daylight the other neighbors laughed hysterically; there was something monstrously ludicrous in this repetition.

'He never got another piece of pipe!'

'I warned him.'

'And I!'

'You wouldn't think he'd need to be warned about such a thing.'

'It seems as if it couldn't be!'

At eight o'clock a reporter from the Middlebury *Gazette* arrived. He stood in the kitchen looking up, tablet and pencil in hand, composing a heading and sub-heading. The one was, 'Fails to Repair Pipe'; the other, 'Coroner Comments upon Coincidence.'

Anna Ruth moved quietly about; neither lame nor in fever, she was able to do all that should be done. Mrs. Barrington offered her services when she should reopen the store; she had stood in her father's store as a girl and perhaps she could help. Anna Ruth thanked her, but she said nothing voluntarily, even to Miss Randall.

'I had my father and my mother and' — she went over the list a score of times. 'Now I haven't anybody.' She did not count Miss

Randall; she had learned not to add any more names to so uncertain a catalogue. Then she considered another loss. She did not regard herself as heir to her father's poor possessions; it seemed to her that he would somehow take them with him.

'I shan't have any money.'

Once she laughed shortly. Her dreams of having five dollars grow to ten and ten to twenty were over. The laugh did not come from her heart; in her heart abode grief and a grim apprehension.

In the middle of the afternoon she lifted her hands from a pail of hot suds she had prepared for scrubbing, and dried them and went into the store. Her father's key to the cash drawer was in her pocket, Line having taken it from Keller's hand. Line was acutely afraid of the appearance as well as the act of assuming rights he did not have.

The cash drawer contained a substantial pile of one-dollar bills, a few fives and tens, and a great deal of silver and copper. Anna Ruth knew the deceptive quality of silver and copper. She opened the drawers beneath, which were locked with the same key and which were filled to the brim with Keller's accumulated mail for ten years

at least. She knew also how valueless were the letters and circulars which he treasured. She locked the cash drawer and, leaving the others unlocked, blushed; for the first time in her life she had acted independently. A strange satisfaction further confused her emotions.

Line was moving about upstairs and she must talk to him at once; there might be degrees of expense in his present work as there were in later processes, the ordering of caskets, robes, flowers, and automobiles.

The door of her father's room was open. All was in order and Line stood on the far side of the bed with its narrow white mound which looked so unnaturally long. Ready to depart, he had a great grayish rumpled cloth rolled under his arm and a leather satchel in his hand. He looked at Anna Ruth kindly and she smiled wanly back. All the grim desperation and grief in the world could not smother the pleasant consciousness that he was her friend.

'Mr. Line,' said she, across the mound on the bed.

'Yes, Annie Ruth.'

'I must tell you that we can't have an expensive funeral. And perhaps I can't pay everything at once. I suppose the store stock will have to be

sold, then I can pay, but perhaps not until then.'

Looking abstractedly first at Keller, then at Anna Ruth, Line laid down his cloth and his satchel and lowered himself into a chair. He was an old man, and tired.

'Annie Ruth, set down.'

Anna Ruth took the other chair. The room contained exactly what it contained on the hot afternoon when she waited for the clock to strike three, except that Mrs. Keller's dresses were gone and Line and Keller were here instead.

'Do you know anything about your father's business, Annie Ruth?' Line stroked his beard nervously — this was certainly intrusion into other people's affairs.

Anna Ruth believed he was trying to find out how much hope there was of payment.

'No,' she answered 'There's some money in the cash drawer, but not much. I think he owned the house and the stock.'

'Your father had three children.' Both Line and Anna Ruth knew this fact well, but Line was arranging a logical approach to a conclusion. 'Roger, he's gone. And Juliet — where's Juliet?' Line looked at the floor; there were most contradictory and amazing reports about Juliet.

'She's in a convent and she'll never come out.'

'Will she expect to inherit off your father?'

'No. She signed a paper.' Anna Ruth uttered a sob, remembering the gray morning and her tears, then and thereafter. 'She gave everything up.'

Line looked at Anna Ruth intently.

'How was this?'

'My father asked her to sign it and she did willingly. It was her twenty-first birthday. She gave her clothes to me.'

Line put his hand into his pocket and held out a tiny, soiled muslin bag. He spoke in a different voice and with new formality.

'Miss Annie Ruth, in this bag there's a key.'

'Yes?' Anna Ruth remembered vaguely a riddle: 'In a mill there are seven cats.'

'This key has a box.'

Anna Ruth remembered: 'Every cat has seven kittens.'

'What box?' she asked.

'A box in the bank.'

'A box in the bank?' She was so stupid that she saw literally the bank of a stream.

'A safety box in the bank. Rich people have such to keep their papers in.'

'He had no papers!'

'And their money.'

'He had no money; he had nothing!' cried Anna Ruth. 'Nothing, nothing, in his whole life!'

'I'm not so sure.' Line settled himself more firmly in his chair and crossed his long legs and folded his arms. His imagination had so occupied itself with this moment that he had hardly been able to work. 'He wasn't the sort to hire a box and pay money for it unless he had something to put in it.'

Anna Ruth knitted her brows.

'Isn't that so?'

'Yes.'

'What did he do with all his profits?'

Anna Ruth frowned. Profits? Keller had had no profits!

'If I were you I'd take that key and go to the banks and find out where it belongs. You can trust me to say nothing.'

Anna Ruth shivered; a marked human being, she could not face so soon the stares of Middlebury. But Line would need his money and probably need it at once; he was old and poor and people were often unable to pay for a long time.

'I'd ask the nurse to go along,' he advised, stooping to gather up his gray cloth and his satchel. 'I'd go, but the people might say I was

too anxious. It isn't that, Miss Annie Ruth, you understand.'

'Yes,' said Anna Ruth.

'It will relieve your mind.'

'Yes,' said Anna Ruth, rising. It would relieve Line's mind also. 'I'll go as soon as she comes.'

Preceding Line down the stairway into the store and thence into the kitchen, Anna Ruth stopped amazed. Holland waited there, his large body filling the room, exhaling prosperity, self-confidence, arrogance, and the odor of superfine tobacco and expensive, highly scented soap. Anna Ruth stepped to one side and Line, advancing, stood beside her. The three were like an allegorical picture of Wealth facing Death and Poverty, or Good Luck facing Bad Luck.

Holland looked disconcerted.

'I came to present my respects, Miss Keller, and also my sympathy.'

Dumbfounded by this condescension, Anna Ruth stared.

'I should like to see you on business. May I make an appointment for this evening?'

'Why, yes.' Then Anna Ruth remembered her father's loud tones and his uplifted arm; she remembered also Mrs. Wynne and Roger. 'Why, no!' she said — then, 'What do you want?'

Holland was still further taken aback.

'It's to your advantage, Miss Keller. I'll come at seven o'clock.'

Backing out, he stepped against Miss Randall. He hated her and all other charity workers, Red Cross secretaries, and the like; they expected too much of one and knew too much about one. He believed that personally they were all hypocrites, they were well behaved because opportunities to be otherwise did not come their way, and he was certain that Miss Randall, disapprovingly as she always looked at him, would accept any attentions he offered her, as May Hurd and other far more attractive women did.

'I beg your pardon!' said he confused, but urbane. 'Good-morning — I mean good-afternoon.'

Miss Randall would have liked to utter a sarcastic 'good-night,' but Holland was too large a contributor to the association which employed her to be wantonly offended. She gratified herself by bowing curtly and by uttering the word 'snake' when he was out of hearing.

'What does he want, Anna Ruth?'

'He came to express his sympathy.'

'Sympathy!' mocked Miss Randall. 'A lot of sympathy he has for anybody!'

For the second time Line laid his satchel and his gray cloth on the floor. He had many opportunities to test Miss Randall's sense and judgment.

'The deceased had a bag round his neck with a key in it. It looks to me like the key of a safe deposit box. I thought perhaps you would go with Miss Annie Ruth to the banks to see where it belongs. I'll keep watch till you come back.'

'A safe deposit box!' echoed Miss Randall.

Anna Ruth held out the key. Line nodded solemnly.

'I suspicioned something this long time. Too much was made in the store and too little spent in the house. I was here once and I saw the deceased receive a long envelope by mail. I believe it contained securities.'

'Securities!' Miss Randall looked at the dingy ceiling, the ragged linoleum, the little clock, the curtainless windows, then last of all at Anna Ruth in her faded gingham.

'Stocks,' explained Line. 'Bonds.'

'Do you suppose' — both Miss Randall and Line forgot Anna Ruth — 'do you suppose Holland suspects that he had property?' Miss Randall quoted an ugly verse from the Bible: 'Where the carcase is, there are the vultures gathered together.'

'I don't know,' said Line. 'I'd beware of him.'

Miss Randall set down her satchel.

'We'll have to go if we want to get in before the bank closes. Come, Anna Ruth.'

Anna Ruth put on her hat and coat. If Miss Randall was with her, she did not mind appearing in public.

'How happy I should be if I could pay the expenses in cash!' she said with a long sigh.

CHAPTER II

MR. RIPLEY IS ASTONISHED

Arm in arm Miss Randall and Anna Ruth went down Duke Street, dreary in the dull November afternoon. They passed Miss Harriet's house — Anna Ruth never thought of Miss Harriet as a help in death or disgrace, this kind of ill was beneath her and apart from her — passed the Garrett House, exactly as they had walked when they went to the movies. Now it was not night, but the middle of the afternoon. Middlebury had six thousand inhabitants and Anna Ruth was known to almost all. They passed citizens going to stare at her house. She did not see how they stopped short at sight of her, but Miss Randall did.

'I don't believe he has a penny in the Middlebury National,' said Miss Randall. 'If he had, Holland would have got hold of it before this; he wouldn't come prowling round now. We'll go first to the Security Company. I know Mr. Ripley there.'

Miss Randall guided Anna Ruth up the steps

and between marble columns. Anna Ruth was trembling; she was, she believed, unfit to be seen. She tried to push open the heavy door and found it impossible, and Miss Randall opened it for her. Together they stepped in upon a tiled floor under a lofty ceiling and faced a handsome grille and five or six indistinct countenances. Even Miss Randall stood in awe of banks. Neither she nor Anna Ruth realized that a deeper hush fell on the room, that low voices ceased to speak, adding machines to add, and pens to move across broad smooth white pages. Mr. Ripley left the enclosure at once and, vanishing through a distant door, reappeared, holding out his hand, a tall, clean-shaven, intellectual gentleman. Again a picture was presented; this might have been Prosperity Advancing to meet Charity and Poverty.

'Miss Randall, I'm glad to see you here.'

'Thank you,' said Miss Randall. 'This is Miss Anna Ruth Keller.' Miss Randall blushed; coming in search of money both she and Anna Ruth made themselves ridiculous. Mr. Ripley evidently thought so, too, and was kind about it. There was a whisper from behind the grille, a whisper doubtless of amusement.

'Step in here, Miss Randall,' said he, opening

the door through which he had come. 'We can talk more comfortably. Please sit down.'

In a handsome little room Miss Randall selected one leather-covered chair and Anna Ruth another. Miss Randall was well seated, but Anna Ruth almost vanished. Both felt more and more unhappy, like persons taking comfort under false pretenses. Mr. Ripley sat down also.

'What can we do for you?' He smiled; Miss Randall saw his effort to put them at their ease.

'We have a key,' said she, blushing. 'You understand that this is Anna Ruth Keller whose father died last night. This key was found and we thought — Mr. Line, the undertaker thought — he's a neighbor' — Miss Randall was determined not to take the blame for this absurd supposition — 'Mr. Line thought it was a key to a safe deposit box. Miss Keller didn't know that her father had such a box, but we thought we'd better see.'

'Mr. Keller has had a box for a long time,' said Ripley promptly. 'We were prepared to notify his heirs.'

Anna Ruth grew still paler.

'Remember, Anna Ruth, there may be nothing of value in it,' warned Miss Randall.

'I know,' said Anna Ruth. 'But, oh, I wish there might be a hundred dollars!'

'How much?' Ripley turned and looked at Anna Ruth directly instead of in the sidewise fashion in which he had regarded her. A student of human nature, he realized that he had part in a remarkable incident.

'She sat there,' he would say when the time came, 'all forlorn and frightened, and she said, "Oh, I wish it might be a hundred dollars!"'

'A hundred dollars,' repeated Anna Ruth. 'With that and what I have I could meet expenses.'

'I think there will be that much.' Ripley looked quizzically at Miss Randall, and she was certain now that they were being laughed at. 'You are, we understand, one of two heirs of Mr. Keller.'

'Yes,' said Anna Ruth. 'But Juliet signed her rights away. And even if she hadn't, she doesn't need or want anything. We can use it all to pay Mr. Line and' — Anna Ruth shivered — 'and others.'

'She sat and clasped her hands,' Mr. Ripley would say. 'And she said, "We can use it all to pay Mr. Line — and others." The minister, I suppose, and the grave-digger.'

Ripley left the room and returned, carrying a long narrow box.

'You understand, Miss Keller, that it takes two keys to open this. You can't open it without us and we can't open it without you. It's kept in a fire and burglar proof vault and it is as thoroughly guarded as anything can be. We can't let you have any of the contents until Judge Severn has authorized us to do so, but we can let you examine them. If your father has made a will, it is probably here, and if he has appointed an executor the settling of his estate will be simple. You're not of age, are you?'

Anna Ruth's dark brows met above her blue eyes.

'I forget what day this is.'

'This is the twenty-seventh.'

Anna Ruth began to cry, remembering Juliet's birthday and her little pale face and her hand as she put firmly away the emblems of the world, namely, one string of blue beads and a few yards of crocheted lace.

'I'm twenty-one to-day!'

'Put the key in the lock,' said Miss Randall gently.

Anna Ruth turned the key round.

'Open the lid,' said Mr. Ripley.

The box was crowded, not with disorderly envelopes, like Keller's locked drawers at home, but with neat stiff documents — printed pamphlets of some kind, Anna Ruth believed them to be. On their edges lay a folded paper which she recognized as the paper Juliet signed. Here was no money, only foolish advertising matter which Keller was always cherishing.

'Don't cry!' said Miss Randall, and Ripley gathered another detail for his narrative. He gave Anna Ruth his most concentrated attention.

'I thought I might find something to pay Mr. Line.'

'May I look?' he asked.

'Yes,' sobbed Anna Ruth. 'Certainly.'

Thrusting his slender fingers with difficulty into the crowded box, Ripley lifted out one document.

'This is a bond worth five thousand dollars, Miss Keller. Here's another for four thousand. They are both of the first water. Here' — Ripley had been standing, he sat down and took the whole bundle of securities and began to read.

'U.S.A. $5000; U.S.A. $5000; Kelly Motor Company, $3000; St. Louis Suburban, $3000; Cleanso Soap, $7000.'

He read on and on; Miss Randall's face grew crimson, then pale. Anna Ruth was still stupid, she understood nothing. Both Ripley and Miss Randall forgot her, as Keller might have forgotten all else if he had seen the golden plates from the walls of Cuzco. Ripley took a pen from the table and jotted down figures.

'How much?' asked Miss Randall against her own will.

'One hundred thousand.' Ripley also was pale and his hands trembled. 'One hundred thousand dollars.' He had suspected that the little man had a good deal, but not as much as that. 'Saved at first little by little, then invested with the sharpness of a Gould and the luck of a' — he was going to say 'fool,' but caught himself in time — 'of a Crœsus.' He need not have been alarmed, Anna Ruth was not listening.

'Will there be enough to bury my father?' she asked.

'Yes,' answered Ripley. He saw Anna Ruth's white brow and her blue eyes and her reddish hair and her poverty. To be twenty-one and pretty and poor, and then have a hundred thousand dollars! What bliss, and what danger!

'Then I can tell Mr. Line to go ahead?' Anna Ruth rose, her errand finished.

'You can tell Mr. Line to go ahead.' Excited to the point of tremulous laughter, Ripley bent close over the box in which he was repacking the long papers. 'I'll speak to Line and to Judge Severn if you wish me to.'

'Thank you.' Anna Ruth laid her hand on the knob and waited for Miss Randall. There was her work waiting and Line guarding the white mound on the bed; she could not linger in this strange place, comfortable as it was.

'Miss Keller!'

Turning, she faced two pairs of wondering eyes. Here was another tidbit for Mr. Ripley.

'You must lock your box!'

Anna Ruth came swiftly back.

'And keep the key carefully.'

'Yes,' promised Anna Ruth. 'I'm very stupid.'

Miss Randall helped her with the lock.

'We shall be glad to attend to your business for you,' offered Ripley.

'Thank you.' Anna Ruth was profoundly grateful and still anxious.

'Shan't I send for a car to take you home?'

'Oh, no!' Anna Ruth was frightened.

'Come this way.' They were guided out through a private passage, the passage through which came and went persons like Mr. Galbreath

who had inherited a fortune from a coal-mining grandfather and Mr. Yates who owned the furniture factory, and Keller who knew by some extraordinary intuition that Smith Tea was very bad and Kelly Motor very good. Slipping through the door, Keller had long ago been seen by Holland.

Miss Randall kept her hand under Anna Ruth's arm.

'You must have a black dress and coat and hat. They'll send some from the department store and Miss Harriet will help you make a selection.'

'Oh, no!' said Anna Ruth. 'My old hat and coat and my brown dress will do with a black band. I have the black band Father wore. I can't spend money for clothes.' On the street though it was, she began to cry. 'What I have I must take care of.' She moved away from Miss Randall's friendly hand and stepped forward, hurrying, walking like her father, her shoulders bent, her knees seeming to keep ahead of her body. With all Miss Randall's haste, Anna Ruth reached the tunnel and the porch long before her.

In the kitchen Line slept, sitting on a chair, his gray cloth on the floor on one side, his black satchel on the other. The bucket of soapsuds

stood on the table where Anna Ruth had left it, Miss Randall's black bag beside it. The day had grown cloudy and the kitchen was dark.

'Mr. Line.'

Line woke instantly and was on his feet.

'You can go ahead.'

'Yes,' said Line. 'Thank you. I thought so. Then your father had a little something, Miss Annie Ruth?'

'Yes,' answered Anna Ruth, frowning. 'There will be enough.'

Miss Randall opened the door to let Line out. Anna Ruth had turned up her skirt and was kneeling, the scrub-bucket beside her, only thin stockings and a thin petticoat between her tender knees and the linoleum.

'I must clean before the funeral,' said she in a worried tone.

'Anna Ruth, will you look at me?'

Anna Ruth complied, turning on her heels, her body still crouched. Miss Randall sat down, breathless from haste.

'Do you realize that you're rich?'

Anna Ruth considered, her face crimson.

'No,' she said at last.

'What will you do with this money?'

'I don't know.' She clasped her dripping

hands as though it were not worth while to dry them for a brief interruption. 'I'll tell Juliet that if she'll come away from where she is, she can have her half.'

'And suppose she does, or doesn't, what will you do then?'

Anna Ruth looked at the dingy ceiling, at the torn linoleum, then into the store with its jars and cans and boxes.

'I'll keep store.'

'You can go to school.'

Anna Ruth shook her head.

'To college — didn't you once want to go to college?'

Still Anna Ruth shook her head.

'And you can travel.'

Anna Ruth looked into the pail of soapsuds. Travel? Cuzco, Lima, Arequipa? She lifted her head and covered her mouth with her wet hand. The hand was blue, the nails were broken, grime was worn into the texture of the skin.

'Miss Randall,' she said slowly, 'I must be alone.'

Miss Randall's face changed expression.

'I don't wonder you feel that way. I'll come back after supper.'

With her leisurely stride, she crossed the porch

and entered the tunnel. At the exit her step quickened and she went swiftly across to Mrs. Barrington's. Mrs. Barrington was finishing an ironing and her kitchen was filled with steam from tubs where a wash had been put to soak. Her round face was red, her curly hair clung to her forehead.

'Can you stay with Anna Ruth till I come back after supper?'

'Sure! The children can get supper and clear up, too.'

'Don't tell her I suggested it.'

'All right,' agreed Mrs. Barrington. 'I'll go in accidental.'

At the corner Miss Randall moderated her pace. Constantly in this part of Middlebury, she knew that at this time of day Holland walked home from his own bank. She saw him advancing importantly, his eyes upon all the ladies, his hat constantly lifted.

'Mr. Holland.'

Holland looked annoyed, then gravely polite.

'Anna Ruth Keller isn't very well and she asks to be excused this evening.'

Holland sneered; those words had not been put together by tongue-tied Anna Ruth.

'I have an appointment with her.'

'I know, but she had an appointment with Mr. Ripley this afternoon and she's very tired. She's had a great deal to endure.' Miss Randall spoke in an innocent tone and her mention of Ripley was casual in the extreme. Hearing it, Holland lifted his hat and prepared to walk on.

'Thank you, madam,' said he.

'Thank you,' answered Miss Randall, a pleasant emphasis on the pronoun.

CHAPTER III

A RETURN

ANNA RUTH was finishing her supper at seven o'clock. It was a late hour for supper, but customers kept coming, and to lose a sale would have been no more of a calamity to Keller than it was to Anna Ruth. She was careful to sit so that she could be seen from the front door.

It was January and she had been for two months alone. Wearing her old coat and her brown dress with a black band on her arm, she had ridden in state to her father's funeral, Miss Randall sitting beside her. First came the hearse, then a car filled with bearers, then the car in which she and Miss Randall rode. Mrs. Keller's funeral had been unnoticed in spite of the tragic circumstances of her death, but Roger's had had watchers on every corner, and Keller's attracted all the attention of a parade.

A vague rumor had crept about to the effect that Keller had accumulated money, but it seemed so absurd that only a few persons repeated it. Anna Ruth was appointed administrator, but she would not be required to file an

account for many months; thus the last Keller excitement would have time to die down before the next leaped up to amaze the town. Ripley was keeping his story to himself until the accounting was made, and Miss Randall also held her tongue. She did not come often to visit Anna Ruth, and sometimes, seeing her at a distance, avoided her. Meetings were infrequent; Anna Ruth devoted herself to business; she was, alas! Keller's Anna Ruth.

She wrote to Juliet according to her declared intention, and, though the letter did not reach Juliet, it was read, for a representative of the Order of Saint Margaret on Clinton Street, Brooklyn, visited Middlebury and Judge Severn, and returned disappointed, having been shown the paper written by Keller and signed so willingly by Juliet and so officiously by Sister Genevieve. Sister Genevieve had waiting for her a bad hour.

With a full realization of the grim humor of the Keller disasters, Miss Harriet hastened to offer her services.

'I'll make you a dress, Anna Ruth.'

Anna Ruth declined; she had not changed her mind about using her black band. On a sudden impulse she turned toward Miss Harriet a white

face which once more gave her completely away.

'Will you tell Arthur Wynne that my father has died?'

'Why, yes,' answered Miss Harriet promptly. How was it possible that the poor child had not learned her lesson? When she felt a momentary impulse to keep the books presented to Anna Ruth, she recognized it as a temptation of the Devil, but in this matter her conscience was not tender. Two months passed and she did not tell Arthur.

The January night was growing stormy and it was not likely that there would be many customers. Anna Ruth was glad that it was so; Mrs. Barrington was coming to help her with her accounts and they could work uninterrupted. In the two months Anna Ruth had made money. She had no theories about store-keeping, but she had inherited the store-keeper's instinct and she had a full knowledge of Keller's careful practice.

Nothing that she did or planned had any relation to her inheritance. If it had been a hundred and one thousand, or even a hundred thousand and a few hundreds, it might have had a different aspect. But a hundred thousand was a sum to hold inviolate. She had paid the expense of Keller's funeral from the profits of the store and

she had still enough on hand to pay for a tombstone. She meant to buy tombstones for all, her father and her mother and Roger, and in order to do this she intended to go without a winter coat and other articles of clothing which she needed.

There were other ways in which she could make money. She had planned to sell the furniture which she did not use, but yesterday she thought suddenly of taking lodgers. Except the expenditure for bedding, it would be clear gain; she could easily keep the rooms in order. One could do anything, suffer anything, accomplish prodigies of labor when one was really keeping off poverty.

She had gathered together other things to sell, all the accumulation of boxes and bottles in the cellar and all the mass of letters from Keller's three drawers under the cash drawer. These she had looked over superficially as they stood on edge in the box. There were no blessed securities here, there were only old letters. Packed in a carton, they awaited the ragman on the back porch. The ragman was a dilatory and trying person who had already delayed a week over the time he promised.

The marble-cutter came at half-past seven and by this time Anna Ruth's plate and cup and

saucer were washed and everything was cleared away. He had the same commiserating, apologetic air as Line; he had never yet had a customer who could really afford to pay. But marble could not be had for nothing and could not be carved for nothing. He took down the three names carefully, Thomas Keller, Jennie Keller, Roger Keller. The three stones would be a — a — hundred dollars, and that was a bargain.

'Very well,' said Anna Ruth with a shiver.

At eight o'clock came Mrs. Barrington to look at Anna Ruth's books. There were no elaborate accounts, only simple records of purchases and of cash sales in bulk. Keller trusted a few old patrons till the end of the week; Anna Ruth trusted no one.

'You ought to get along well,' declared Mrs. Barrington. 'You have only yourself and this is a good business.'

'I have many bills.' Anna Ruth regretted having shown her books. 'There are funeral expenses.'

'I wish I had a store,' sighed Mrs. Barrington. 'I could make it pay. I'm wearing out with hard work. I have to let the little boys sell papers and they're getting rough. It's a hard world, Anna Ruth. You've found that out.'

Anna Ruth looked up, deep points of light shining in her eyes. In her heart a kindly impulse stirred, but it was too weak to come to fruitage. It was a hard world, and one must look out for one's self.

When Mrs. Barrington was gone, she sat down on her father's padded box. She had meant to cushion the box, but she had concluded that that was very foolish when the old newspapers were already there and she would need all her pillows for her lodgers' beds.

While she waited for customers she would read. She did not read Prescott; Prescott had stood for weeks unread, unregarded and even undusted. She reached down and took from the side of the box a newspaper which Miss Harriet had brought in yesterday. She did not look at the first page, though there were large headlines, nor at the second, though there were pictures; she turned far back and read columns of fine figures, her head bending lower and lower. There was a little tapping outside the window, but she did not look up. What a marvelous and enchanting subject for meditation! Her father had tied an old pencil by a long string to the counter and she reached out absently and took it and began to mark the paper. She did not see Carson walk

by and glance in and look over his shoulder toward his house and walk on. For two months Carson had tried to see Anna Ruth alone. Hearing the sound of an opening door, he plunged into a protecting shadow.

'U.S.A.' — she had ten thousand dollars' worth of that. 'Kelly Motor' — she had three thousand dollars' worth of that. 'St. Louis Suburban' — she had three thousand dollars' worth of that. 'General Aluminum' — she had — she lifted her head, hearing the little tapping at her ear. But again she read on. 'N and P' — she had — there was a louder sound and she looked up dazed, not toward the window, but toward the door. Two women had come in and stood regarding her pleasantly, one with a tablet in her hand.

'Miss Keller, we're collecting for the support of the Civic Nurse. You have had the benefit of her services, and while we don't expect pay, we know you'll be glad to give something, if only a little, for our fund.'

Anna Ruth rose and stood blinking as if roused from sleep.

'It's for Miss Randall's salary.'

'I wonder,' said the first lady, 'whether you wouldn't feel like giving us five dollars.'

Anna Ruth looked at them so steadily and so long without speaking that they thought she was deaf or dumb or both, or perhaps paralyzed by the shock of calamity.

'Perhaps you don't feel you can give anything?'

'Oh, I can't!' said Anna Ruth unsteadily. 'I've had so many expenses. I can't!'

The visitors blushed for their lack of sense.

'We hope you won't hesitate to call Miss Randall when you need her.'

Anna Ruth had used her more than any resident of Duke Street except Captain Gross and Burling Crane, but Anna Ruth made no response.

'You see, it isn't the idea that people shall pay her to help them, it's that they shall pay her to help others.'

Still Anna Ruth did not speak. Without bidding her guests farewell, she sank down out of sight. Trembling she thought of the cash drawer as though they might have helped themselves.

Disconcerted, the ladies hastened out of the bright light of the doorway and stepped directly into the nook where Carson had hidden himself. He fled, his arms waving like the wings of a bird surprised upon his roost. He ran, and with

every leap Anna Ruth's prospect of learning about her letters grew more uncertain. Postponement was of little importance; Anna Ruth cared no more for South America than for South Africa.

A little farther on the ladies met Miss Randall walking slowly along, her satchel apparently heavy.

'Miss Randall, is that you?'

'Yes.'

'We've done a dreadful thing!'

Miss Randall laughed.

'What dreadful thing can you have done?'

'We went to that poor Miss Keller and asked her to give five dollars toward your salary!'

The sentence was exclamatory and Miss Randall did not speak until its echo had died away.

'And she wouldn't?' she asked soberly.

'She said she couldn't, and I believe her. The poor little soul! I wish we hadn't gone. I don't think we ought to try to collect a penny on this street.'

'Yes, you ought,' said Miss Randall. 'I help everybody, and everybody can give a little. The undertaker will give all he can and so will Captain Gross and Mrs. Barrington. If you don't go to

old Azalea's, she'll bring you five or ten cents. Don't be discouraged.'

Miss Randall spoke brightly, but when the collectors had crossed the street her shoulders drooped again. Without giving Anna Ruth's store a glance she walked on heavily.

Again Anna Ruth heard the little tapping, forgotten in her confusion. It was not the wind, it was a sound made by some live creature. Her eyes grew fixed and round, she tried to see without turning her head. What was it, what could it be? Had she not locked the kitchen door?

Then she uttered an hysterical laugh and turned her head in a flash. From outside the window a pair of green eyes regarded her, a mouth, set with fine, sharp teeth grinned at her, and an emaciated body pressed close to the pane. Bursting into tears, she hastened to throw up the sash.

'Come in!' she cried to Beauty whom she had hated. 'Dear, dear Beauty, come in!'

Beauty walked in gingerly and looked about, at the ceiling, at the walls, under the table, behind the counter. Preparing to go upstairs, Anna Ruth talked to him as Keller had talked.

'I'm glad you're back. You must catch mice now; they're eating me up.'

Undressing, she hummed the tuneless air her father had hummed for thirty years, 'ummmmmm' — was all the sense it made Once she had had a wall between herself and terror — 'I have my father and my mother and Roger and Juliet and Miss Harriet and May Hurd and Arthur.' Now she had another wall. 'I have a hundred thousand dollars. I shall make it two hundred thousand.' These were the exact words that Keller was setting to his tuneless air when he felt suddenly the irresistible necessity for sleep.

She had left the door open and, staring from her bed into the darkness of the hall, she saw near the floor a pair of tiny lamps, shining with a green light. They remained motionless for a long time, then they moved, now lost to view, now gleaming directly at her. She heard a purr, at first soft, then loud, then still louder, murmuring contentment, then breathing hoarsely a sort of possessive triumph. The lamps shone now from the floor, now from the table, now from the wash-stand beside the works of Prescott, now from the bureau, now from the window-sill. Long after Anna Ruth was asleep, they continued their fitful illumination of the rooms. At last, having inspected the upper court of his palace, the genius

descended to the feast which had long been assembling for him and, having gorged his fill, lay down under the kitchen stove. Once he lifted his head and looked upward as though he thought of Anna Ruth and envied her the warmth and softness of her bed.

CHAPTER IV

BEAUTY'S WARM BED

ANNA RUTH sat in the store on Keller's box, a newspaper in her hands. Her hair was smooth, but unbecomingly arranged; she wore her old brown dress, and over her shoulders — oh, poor Anna Ruth! — her father's coat. She had been calculating, and a little tablet like her father's lay upon her lap. The markers were paid for, all other bills were met, and there was a hundred and twenty-five dollars hidden in the house. Twenty-five would be enough to keep on hand, to-morrow she would carry to the bank a hundred which she had earned. She had also had the strange joy of cutting coupons to the amount of six hundred. Mr. Ripley had not told even his wife about her; there was something intolerably pathetic and grossly offensive in her prettiness and her greed.

She felt an excited happiness, different from content as night from day. She had an actual fever, and she licked her hot lips as Hannah Kress licked hers when she scented scandal. She looked not twenty-one, but twenty-five; if she

had not worn childish clothes, she would have looked thirty. A line was forming between her blue eyes, and her mouth was becoming set. Juliet would never come to claim her money; it was all hers, Anna Ruth's, a hundred thousand dollars and seven hundred dollars. She laughed a harsh little laugh; then she screamed at the impact of a round furry body.

'Get out of my lap, Beauty! Get down! I don't like you in my lap!'

But Beauty jumped back again and again like a kitten leaping for a ball, and at last it was easier to let him stay than to push him off. She held him while she read about 'U.S. Aluminum' and 'St. Louis Suburban.'

At eight o'clock Azalea came to buy tobacco. Azalea had ceased to beg; she looked at Anna Ruth, not with queer mischief as she looked at Keller, but with profound astonishment.

'Five cents' worth to chew, Miss Anna Ruth.' Azalea's front teeth were gone, and she, like Keller, said 'Anna Roos.' She handed over her nickel and found it taken promptly.

'It's a hard world, Miss Anna Roos.'

'Yes,' said Anna Ruth. It was a sentiment to which the Duke Street store-keeper had frequently to agree.

'But the Lord always takes care of you. Here I am, saved from the Ku-Klux, livin' yet.'

From the corner of her eye Anna Ruth saw Miss Randall pass the lighted space outside the door. She looked worn out; she had had a hard time with Burling Crane, and she and the sheriff had taken him to the asylum. She walked rapidly, with averted head.

Mrs. Barrington came for a half-pound of prunes. Her husband had found another counter to lean on; he had returned twice to his old haunt, and the second time his favorite place was preëmpted by a flour barrel. There was, as far as he could see, no place to lean. Mrs. Barrington paid the extra cent for the half-pound. She knew the rules of the game and she did not condemn Anna Ruth. She looked worn and wistful and all her plump prettiness was in eclipse.

When she had gone, Anna Ruth took up her paper and pencil. She had not encouraged Mrs. Barrington to linger, she encouraged no one to waste her time. Like her father she had a mail-box in which on weekly visits she found letters from brokers who handled large investments, and she thought gloatingly of to-morrow's excursion to the post-office. Before long she would invest in a bond and she must decide meanwhile what it

should be. When, at ten o'clock, Carson entered, she was astonished to see him at that hour and alone. Everybody knew Carson, and he was aware that everybody knew that he was spied upon and persecuted from morning till night.

He made the motions of one creeping round the edge of the door. He wore the trousers of his uniform, but he had on an old brown coat and he lacked collar and tie and needed a shave. Mrs. Carson was at work in the cellar, late though it was, and, moved by remorse which he could no longer endure, he seized this moment to make confession. Closing the door and advancing no farther, he tried to be casual, but the expectation of pursuit and the consciousness of his cowardice made his knees shake and his mouth tremble. He looked back over his shoulder, then at Anna Ruth, growing pale and red by turns. He need not have been alarmed.

'Miss Anna Ruth,' said he. 'I often wondered whether you still heard from South America. That's an interesting country.'

Anna Ruth looked blankly up at him.

'South America?' she repeated at last.

Carson knew certainly now that Keller had never delivered Anna Ruth's letter.

'I brought a few letters for you from South

America,' he explained. 'From Peru.' He pronounced it 'Pee-ru.' 'Afterward your father had his mail delivered at the office, and I didn't get any more. I ought to of told you.'

Anna Ruth regarded him without anger.

'I hope you won't hold it against me.'

'Oh, no!' Anna Ruth saw a rectangle of light appear suddenly across the street. 'You'd better go,' she advised frankly and kindly. There was little pretense or mincing of matters in Duke Street. She felt pity for Carson, and she was anxious to return to her study of market prices.

Carson went at once, without a backward glance, and she watched him into the house, as one might watch a child. Mrs. Carson closed the door and Anna Ruth was promptly avenged.

Anna Ruth stood for a long time in the same spot, then she went absently about closing the store and kitchen. She was still alone, having found no lodgers; but night and solitude had no terror for one who was too weary to think or to be afraid. Absently, instead of going upstairs, she approached the padded box.

South America — she remembered how she had gone with Miss Randall to the movies before she had her hundred thousand dollars. She recalled dimly the mountains and the vast ruins

and the young astronomer looking through a telescope. They were the details of a foolish dream and she had a protection now against foolish dreams. Keller knew how to protect himself; when Juliet went away, he still had assurance of support. When Roger disgraced them, he still knew that he was safe. He did not need the store he had laid by, but that was mere chance. She would need it, she would live to be very old.

Unresentfully she began to wonder what Keller had done with her letters. Had he torn them up? He destroyed nothing; he would probably put them with his own to be sold as waste paper. The carton into which she had packed his letters was still on the porch.

But she did not move; she continued to sit on the padded box, looking abstractedly across the store. For months she had gazed with aching misery over land and sea watching for letters; now that they were within reach it was a burden to fetch them. The noises on the street ceased, the clock ticked more loudly, then struck eleven, and still she sat motionless, her hands hanging at her sides. It was cold, and she had long since fixed the fire for the night. Heart and body grew numb and a profound weariness overcame her. Could she not sleep here, bending her head for-

ward against the counter, as her father sometimes slept?

But her housemate interfered with her slumber. Beauty leaped and she screamed lightly. Beauty was indispensable, but she hated his soft body flung upon her, his dusty fur against her hand.

'Get down!' she cried. 'Get away! I don't like you in my lap!'

Beauty jumped again, was thrust away. His persistence seemed to declare, 'You and I are friends, we understand each other.' Anna Ruth sprang up to be rid of him, and once on her feet went into the kitchen and opened the door on the porch. The carton was where she had placed it on a pile of boxes, and she carried it in and put it on the kitchen table and sat down. If she had missed her letters, she might easily have missed more important papers.

Baking powder, sugar, ham, tea, spices — the business card in the corner announced the commodity advertised within. All were addressed to Keller. She had looked at fifty when her eyes deepened and her cheeks paled and her hand began to tremble. Here was an envelope without printing, addressed to her and bearing a strange stamp. She looked at it for a long time, it was

dirty and worn thin; then she took out the letter and found it mended in the creases. Its date was January two years ago. It began, 'My darling Anna Ruth.'

'My darling Anna Ruth!' — she started to read at ten o'clock, and read slowly, about the snow-covered mountains and the ruined cities and Arthur's work. It was a continuation and an elaboration of the single letter which she had had. Her mind worked slowly, as though it were benumbed by the cold or wearied by the long distance into the past which memory had to travel.

'I'm sending you with this letter a photograph which I took myself. The exposure was ten hours. Hold it up above your head as though the bright stars which make the cross were in the south, halfway between the horizon and the zenith.' 'Horizon,' 'zenith' — Anna Ruth could not remember what they meant. — 'That's where they are to-night. What are their names, Anna Ruth?' — 'Names?' said Anna Ruth aloud. 'Names?' — 'Then fancy El Misti directly before you and Pichu Pichu to your left and Chachani behind you and you have all the prospect.'

Anna Ruth searched the carton through, but

found no photograph. She did find, however, two other letters. Arthur's tongue was loosed.

'It's most beautiful here, the skies are clear and the flowers marvelous and I love you. Since you were a little girl I've loved you. I've never thought of any one but you in all my life. I think of you in the morning and at night and all day. If I were rich, I would go home to-morrow and bring you back. If I can arrange to go later, will you come with me? Do you love me? Are you well? Are you happy? I'm so sorry about your mother. Is your father well and Juliet and Roger? You're so dear, and so bright, and so far away.'

At one o'clock Anna Ruth laid down this letter and lifted the last. It was beseeching, unhappy.

'Why don't you write? I ask Miss Harriet and she gives me no news. I've been sick for a month with fever and I dream that you'll write, but you don't.'

At two o'clock Anna Ruth sat holding her letters. Beauty had sprung to a chair and thence to the table where he lay purring deeply.

'I might once have been happy,' said Anna Ruth out of a dream.

She turned out the light and went to her room, Beauty following after, unseen and dangerously

close to her feet. She sat on the edge of her bed, her shoulders bowed, her eyes fixed intently on space. She heard two sounds. One was the actual utterance of her own voice, 'I have a hundred thousand dollars. I can have two hundred thousand. Not many persons have two hundred thousand dollars.' The other was a whisper coming from far away on a stormy night, 'Is it you, Anna Ruth? Is it you, Anna Ruth?' Anna Ruth sat perfectly still.

'Two hundred thousand dollars!' — she would turn, all dressed as she was, and lie down and draw the old covers over her and hug the thought as though it were a living creature to be slept with and caressed. 'Is it you, Anna Ruth?' — a sea on which there were undoubtedly fierce storms, an incredibly distant place, snow-covered mountains, deep clefts in the earth, strange men and women, strange long-necked animals, enormous birds of prey. 'Never, never, never,' shuddered Anna Ruth. In the morning she would carry her hundred dollars to the bank.

Then, magically and promptly, Anna Ruth's vague idea of a companion for her bed came true, her thought of her riches was incarnate in a living creature. Turning and drawing the covers to her chin she found something beside her, something

which crept against her neck, her face, something alive, warm, furry, smelling of poor coffee and manufactured spices and brown sugar and gasoline. Beauty had penetrated to the warm place he coveted. He was the store in living essence, he was Anna Ruth's business in all its economy and ecstasy; it was appropriate that he should sleep next his mistress's heart. A deep purr, like no purr she had ever heard, so profound was its contentment, spoke close to Anna Ruth's ear her own words, 'two hundred thousand dollars, two hundred thousand dollars.'

Appalled, she tried to move, to shrink away, but the furry ball moved with her, and to push it away, but it would not be pushed. She tried to speak, but the purr was louder than her voice. Terrified, she sprang up and lit the gas. Beauty stretched his paws, his claws moving in and out of their sheaths as though he beckoned her to return. But she did not see him, she saw a white face in the mirror and suffered a hideous delusion — were the pale cheeks, the staring eyes hers or her father's?

For a moment she stood still regarding it; then she hid with her hands the face of which it was the image.

'Oh, no!' she cried. 'Oh, no! no! no!'

Taking her hands away she looked at herself bravely, and amazement overwhelmed her. Love never faileth, but she had failed Arthur. She had done what she could for her mother and her father and Juliet and Roger, but toward Arthur she had failed utterly. Love never failed, but she had failed, she had not trusted him, she had written him but one letter, she had been proud. Love suffereth long and is kind, but she had not suffered long, and she had not been kind. His father had died, his mother had abandoned him, and she had forgotten him, she, Anna Ruth, who had condemned his mother.

'You have' — the reminder seemed to emanate from the creature in the bed — 'You have a hundred thousand dollars.'

She remembered the touch of Azalea's hand as she paid five cents for her small portion of tobacco, she remembered a deep look in Mrs. Barrington's eye as she handed over fourteen cents for her prunes, she remembered Miss Randall's averted gaze.

'O God!' wailed Anna Ruth. 'O God, don't let me die!'

It was not Anna Ruth's way to linger and postpone. Leaping as Beauty leaped when he fled from death, she ran to the kitchen and lit the

gas and put the drafts on the fire. She lit the gas in the store and in all the rooms in the house; she sent light to all dark corners; it was only because Hannah Kress was growing old that she did not come clamoring at the door. She climbed to the third story and brought down a bag which had belonged to Roger and packed her meager belongings, then she began to dust and clean. The clock struck three and four and five and six. The fire had burned out and she closed the door of a cold house and, carrying her satchel and wearing the clothes she had worn to Keller's funeral, even to the black band on her arm, she went down the boardwalk to Miss Harriet's. She had opened the door for Beauty and invited him out; he had taken care of himself for months, he could do so again. He went willingly enough, although with a little snarl.

Miss Harriet was putting her sitting-room in order and she looked at Anna Ruth in surprise. She had again offered to help her with her clothes — probably Anna Ruth had brought material or something to be repaired. She was not afraid of Anna Ruth any more. She sank a little wearily into her chair by the fire; the early morning hours were not her best.

'Sit down.'

Anna Ruth stood leaning against the door, her heavy bag in her hand. She looked like a child grown old before her time.

'I can stay only a minute,' she said, hoarse with excitement and weariness. 'I want to ask a question.'

'What is that?' Miss Harriet had no expectation that she was to be startled and annoyed more than she had ever been in all her life.

'When did you hear from Arthur?'

'Arthur?' This time Miss Harriet's tongue played her a trick; she did not intend to be mean.

Anna Ruth did not explain; she merely continued to stare inquiringly. Miss Harriet was irritated by this steady gaze.

'A few weeks ago.'

'He was still in Peru?'

'Naturally.'

'How long is he going to stay?'

'For another year.' Miss Harriet's tone resented this interrogation.

'Did he tell you he'd been sick?'

'Sick? No. He hasn't been sick.'

The fire made crackling sounds; otherwise everything was quiet. Anna Ruth's deep eyes glowed, her cheeks blazed. He confided in her, after all, and not in Miss Harriet. He took pos-

session of her once more, not as a suppliant for charity, but as a master.

'I've been out of my mind,' she declared slowly.

Miss Harriet lost patience.

'What ails you?'

Anna Ruth tried to seize the flat wall with her hand.

'I'm going to Peru,' she said slowly.

Again the fire made pleasant crackling sounds.

'You're going where?'

'I'm going to Peru. I'm going to-day.' Anna Ruth trembled like a leaf; the bag dropped from her hand with a thud.

Miss Harriet meant to ask with light mockery, 'Anna Ruth, are you mad?' but she only stared confounded.

'He's written to me and I haven't had his letters.'

'Has he asked you to come to Peru?' Miss Harriet believed that she could still control this wild creature.

'He said he'd come for me. But I've treated him cruelly. I can't wait for him to come home.'

'You've treated him cruelly?'

'I stopped writing when he seemed to stop

writing. I didn't trust him. I didn't love him. I was too proud.'

'Proud?' said Miss Harriet.

'Yes, proud,' answered Anna Ruth firmly.

'If what you say is true, wouldn't it be more' — Miss Harriet's brain was in a whirl, but she used one of the dignified, old-fashioned words for which Anna Ruth admired her — 'more seemly to wait here?'

'Perhaps,' agreed Anna Ruth, lifting her bag. 'But I'm going.'

'Have you engaged passage?'

'No.'

'Then how will you go?'

'I'll go to New York and wait.'

In contemplation of this madness, Miss Harriet became mad. She laughed with pure amusement, undarkened by scorn. Fortunately an insuperable obstacle blocked the way of Anna Ruth.

'I can't lend you money for any such wild-goose chase.'

Anna Ruth stood blinking. Money?

'But I have money,' she declared. 'I have a hundred thousand dollars.'

'You have what?' Miss Harriet was reduced to exclamations and repetitions.

'I have a hundred thousand dollars.' The clock ticked loudly for a long moment. 'My father saved it.' Anna Ruth's hand was on the knob.

'What of the store?' gasped Miss Harriet.

'I'm going to give it away.'

'Give it away!'

'To Mrs. Barrington. She's to help Azalea and the poor.' Tears ran down Anna Ruth's cheeks, but she seemed composed.

'Where is your money?'

'Mr. Ripley has it in the bank.'

The name established Anna Ruth's case.

'Are you going to be married in Peru?'

'I suppose so.'

'How do you know you can be?'

This unimportant matter did not disturb Anna Ruth. 'I saw a movie and there were civilized people and automobiles and electric lights. There must be ministers.'

Miss Harriet rose.

'You thought you'd go to college!'

'College?' Anna Ruth shook her head. 'I'm too old for college.'

'Have you ever been anywhere?'

'To Brooklyn,' said Anna Ruth thoughtfully. 'And I had no trouble.'

Miss Harriet grew pale. What report would

this wild, determined creature give of her to the human being she loved best?

'Will you wait till I can telegraph to New York for your passage and till you can get suitable clothes?'

Anna Ruth did not know that she was cruel; she merely accepted Miss Harriet for what she had shown herself to be.

'Miss Randall will help me. I'll do what she says.' She motioned with her head toward the Keller homestead, where she had been born and where she had slept every night of her life. 'I'm not going back there any more. Good-bye, Miss Harriet.'

Miss Harriet had never embraced her, and now she did not offer to embrace Miss Harriet. Miss Harriet came after her to the door and watched as she passed under the bare arbor.

'Anna Ruth!' she cried.

'Yes,' said Anna Ruth, turning obediently.

Miss Harriet's brain was in a strange state.

'Do you think your poor father would like you to spend his hard-earned money like this?'

Anna Ruth regarded her, round-eyed. She blushed and a golden light came into her eyes.

'I believe he would,' she answered slowly — 'now.'

'Anna Ruth!'

'Yes, Miss Harriet.'

'Do you believe a word you've said?'

'No,' Anna Ruth answered with a little laugh. 'But I'm going to Peru.'

Breakfasting in her small apartment, Miss Randall heard a knock and called 'Come in.' She always wondered in the interval between her invitation and the response what new misery would present itself. When she saw Anna Ruth standing outside, her satchel in her hand, she was transfixed with astonishment. What else had Anna Ruth to lose to make her look like this? Her hundred thousand dollars?

'Come in!'

Anna Ruth came in, her satchel bumping against the jamb. She closed the door and sat down.

'Miss Randall.'

'Yes, Anna Ruth.'

Anna Ruth fumbled in her bosom.

'Do you remember bringing me a letter when I was sick?'

'Very well.'

'Here' — Anna Ruth stumbled across the room — 'here are other letters. I found them last night.'

'Do you wish me to read them?'

Anna Ruth nodded. She sat down and twisted her feet awkwardly round the legs of her chair while Miss Randall turned from page to page, her face growing pink, then rose, then crimson. She saw Keller and his sordid house, she saw the young astronomer looking through his telescope, she saw Anna Ruth's agony of hope and despair. She looked steadily at Anna Ruth and Anna Ruth looked back at her.

'I love you,' declared Anna Ruth, weeping. 'I've been out of my mind.'

'I love you,' answered Miss Randall happily.

'What would you do about these letters if you were me?'

'Do!' burst out Miss Randall wildly. 'Do! I'd take the next steamer!'

'I've packed my clothes,' said Anna Ruth. 'I'm going to tell a few people good-bye. I'm going to give my store to Mrs. Barrington, and then I'm going to start.'

Miss Randall bent her head, then lifted it. She might at this moment have been sailing down a hill calling 'Whoop!'

'I can find a substitute,' she said. 'I haven't taken a vacation for two years. I'm going to see you off.'

CHAPTER V

THE ADVENTURER

Anna Ruth Keller, child of Jennie and Thomas, and sister of Juliet and Roger, none of whom had ever been two hundred miles from home, lay in her chair on the deck of the *Orontic*, three days out, under a starry sky, listening idly and inattentively to the conversation of her neighbor and roommate, Mrs. Whittle. Mrs. Whittle, who was to leave the next day at Havana, was making the most of the time that remained.

Provided, thanks to the efforts of Miss Randall, with the luxuries of travel, Anna Ruth wore a fashionably cut dress, écru in color and trimmed with woven Persian bands of dull green and red, and was covered with a red rug, light in weight and of finest wool, articles which came not from the department store of Mr. Holland, but from a New York shop. A still heavier and handsomer rug had been put away after the first cold days.

'Buy your rugs, don't rent them; you may need them for couch covers,' advised Miss

Randall. Miss Randall forgot nothing; her manner was excited, her cheeks were continually flushed, her eyes continually shining; she had more the air of a prospective bride than Anna Ruth whom self-reproach haunted and misgiving oppressed.

Anna Ruth not only wore stylish clothes; she looked stylish; her hair was of a color sought after by society belles, her figure had a fashionable slenderness, and she held herself well. The care of stewards and waiters, she who had always cared for others acquired a hearty appetite and put on a brilliant color. A few more days and she would become a conspicuous person; already passengers were beginning to be aware that her eyes were very blue and that her mouth was pleasant.

Farewell had been said to Mrs. Barrington and to Line, to the neighbors across the street and to Ripley. Mrs. Barrington provided a tearful blessing and Ripley more substantial necessities. Anna Ruth's business, large as it was, was so simple that it could be attended to easily by him. He was furnished with a mysterious climax to his story.

'You're going to Peru!' he cried. Duke Street rang with the word, and to-morrow all Middle-

bury would be repeating it. 'Are you going for your health?'

'Yes,' answered Miss Randall for her. The journey would surely improve Anna Ruth's health.

'But why so far?'

'She's always been interested in Peru,' Miss Randall said.

'Has she friends there?'

'Yes.' Thrilled and excited, approving and uneasy, Miss Randall explained no further.

Anna Ruth, who had hitherto seen nothing, had now seen New York City and New York Harbor and the Statue of Liberty, and a gray sea and a blue sea, and flying fish, and the incredible loveliness of sailing ships, and the majesty of sunrise, and, for the first time in her life, the whole of the vast and ever-changing sky. Anna Ruth, who had lived in an atmosphere of overripe bananas, kerosene, and coal gas felt the sea wind on her cheek and the salt spray on her lips. At present, lying in her chair and listening idly to Mrs. Whittle's steady flow of unimportant speech, she watched, with a clear sky overhead, the dark clouds and vivid lightning flashes of a storm at Palm Beach.

The *Orontic* was not a sumptuously outfitted

excursion steamer with private baths, lounges, elevators, and swimming-pools; it carried freight as well as passengers and its passengers were of the more sober and useful order of mankind. There were Government officials bound for Panama, a mining engineer bound for Anafagasta, a leather merchant visiting many South American ports, a young doctor belonging to the Rockefeller Foundation at Guayaquil, English women missionaries returning to their field at Cuzco, a geologist in the employ of the Standard Oil Company, and an anthropologist going to study the head-hunters of Ecuador. As yet Anna Ruth knew only her neighbor and the Captain, beside whom she sat shyly at mealtime.

Mrs. Whittle, a tall stout woman with a square pale face and very black hair, was taking a sea journey for her health. A casual observer would have ascribed her ailment, if it existed, to too much indulgence in good food, and, if that was the case, with coffee and fruit in her berth, a hearty breakfast, bouillon and biscuit at eleven o'clock, lunch at one, tea with buttered scones at five, a six-course dinner at seven, and a lunch before bedtime, she was making no effort to cure her malady. At Havana she expected to see the sights until the next returning steamer. She had

talked more since she and Anna Ruth took up their narrow abode together than Anna Ruth had talked in her whole life, chiefly of her relatives, who were very superior, and of her husband's, who were very inferior. Her sister-in-law especially had done her many ill turns, and her final meanness was to die without making a will. The word 'will' caught Anna Ruth's ear.

'She said all her jewelry was to be mine, everything, but she never put it in writing, not a word of it. When you mean to will a thing, will it, and don't talk about it, that's what I say. Well, coming home from Europe, down she went on the *Titanic*, hide and hair, to the bottom of the sea, and that was the end of her. All her things were sold.'

Anna Ruth looked startled and her bright color faded. She had thought of the possibility of Arthur's death, but not of her own.

'Are we likely to meet storms?'

'You may. The Caribbean is choppy and they say you get into fierce gales after you've passed the Canal.'

Anna Ruth lay thinking intently and Mrs. Whittle talked on and on about her thoughtless relative.

'I'm going to bed,' said Anna Ruth presently.

'I'll join you by and by,' promised Mrs. Whittle. 'I must have a little lunch.'

In the morning when Anna Ruth had breakfasted, she sought the Captain in a room next the purser's office where she had seen him at this hour. He was talking with a passenger and, looking up, was startled by the intentness of Anna Ruth's blue gaze.

'Well, sister,' said he pleasantly, 'have you come to ask whether we're on time?'

'No,' said Anna Ruth. 'I came on business.'

The Captain's guest departed and the Captain motioned Anna Ruth to his chair.

'I'd like to make my will,' announced Anna Ruth. 'I forgot it before leaving.'

The Captain smiled.

'It will be very simple.' Anna Ruth remembered Juliet's quittance. 'Just a few words. I thought I ought to have a witness.'

'Are you of age?'

'Yes.'

'Have you no natural heirs, father or mother or brother or sister?'

'None.'

'And you have property?'

'Yes.'

'There's pen and ink.'

The paper had the ship's name on it, and Anna Ruth wrote a date and a few words: 'I leave everything I have to Arthur Wynne, of Arequipa, Peru. Anna Ruth Keller.' The Captain wrote his name below.

'Now, what are we to do with this document?'

'Please put it away for me.'

The Captain's eyes twinkled.

'Are you afraid the ship will go down?'

Anna Ruth blushed with embarrassment at having reflected on his ability.

'I thought something might happen,' she confessed. Looking at him bravely, she saw his smile change to a broad grin, and suddenly she began to laugh, for the second time in her life until tears ran down her cheeks.

'I suppose the will would go down, too!'

'Probably,' answered the Captain.

Stepping out on deck, Anna Ruth was observed by the young doctor from Guayaquil. She was smiling to herself, her color was still brighter, her conversation with the Captain had removed all her added years. She paced round and round; the speed of the steamer seemed inadequate, the hours dragged. Havana would be reached at midnight and Mrs. Whittle was already in the stateroom packing her elaborate belongings.

After a bad night she had decided that steamer fare did not agree with her and she looked forward hopefully to the hot dishes of the tropics.

Anna Ruth went on and on, moving so as to keep ahead of her own thoughts. 'Love never faileth' — but Roger had been fond of May Hurd for a few weeks and his love had failed, and May had loved him for years and her love had failed, and Mr. Holland had loved Mrs. Wynne and his love had failed. Holland was now riding about with May Hurd beside him in his roadster. Her own love had not endured through calamity and she understood that a worse thing might happen than that Arthur should die. In her cabin she took his last letter from its warm resting-place.

'I wish you loved me as I love you,' wrote Arthur.

'I do!' said Anna Ruth. 'I do!'

Still fearing her own thoughts, she went to the saloon for a book and found 'Villette.' Mrs. Whittle packed and repacked, forgetting her; the pleasant young doctor walked past and studied her preoccupied face, wishing that he was acquainted with her. She had read few stories and she was absorbed by the romantic, impossible, yet real history of Lucy Snowe. She rose to have

her lunch, to lend a hand to Mrs. Whittle, and to dine; then seized by a grave premonition she turned to the end of the book. There was a storm, the hero did not come home. White and faint she went down to the cabin. But Arthur surely lived and was safe!

Havana showed white and clear in the moonlight, a city of fairyland.

'You've told me nothing about yourself, nothing,' complained Mrs. Whittle at parting.

'I'll write you a letter,' promised Anna Ruth, her face burning. 'That is,' said she in terror to her own heart, 'that is if I have anything to tell.'

In the morning, coming on deck, she remembered Duke Street and all its odors and hastened to think of something else. She remembered Miss Randall, but found in her no assurance; she remembered Arthur and found despair. The steamer was still skirting the coast of Cuba, but she could find no comfort in mountains or waving palms or blue sea, and she had no interest in the sharks which swarmed the waters, or in porpoises and flying fish. There was something the matter with the sky and the sea and she wished only rest and sleep and darkness. A kind face smiled upon her and a kind voice spoke as though from a long distance.

'It's a little choppy.'

She tried to answer, but failed. An arm was slipped under hers and she was helped down to her cabin where the stewardess received her, calling her 'Poor lamb!' For three days she felt no breeze and saw no blue sea.

Ascending once more, inconspicuous and pale, she found the afternoon air warm and heavy and summer clothes a burden. She slept in her chair until hunger leaped within her; then fed, and teased by the Captain, she was young Anna Ruth once more. The Canal was at hand; early in the morning she rose to see the low hills of Panama, the arms of a breakwater open to receive her, the white houses of Colon thickly embowered by trees.

Hearing a step, she glanced up and, finding the young doctor smiling at her, blushed, recalling that it was he who helped her to her berth. She remembered dimly that he had visited her and had promised laughingly that she would not die.

'Have you taken this trip before?'

'No, sir,' she answered politely.

'We'll be in the Canal before long. You know we have seven miles on sea level, then we're lifted up eighty-five feet. If we have an early start, we get to the Pacific at sunset.'

'Yes?' Oh, that he would tell her more! She was going to be with Arthur Wynne and she knew nothing and he everything. Her uplifted face invited conversation.

'You know we're actually raised and then lowered, all of us, in this great steamer.'

Anna Ruth's idea of being lowered was that the great steamer would shoot swift and perilous rapids, but the method of raising she could not conceive.

'I see palm trees,' she cried. 'Are they palm trees?'

'They are.'

The steamer entered the narrowing channel and even the drowsiest passenger appeared on deck.

'What is that?' asked Anna Ruth.

'A coal elevator,' explained the young man. He told her his name, Allingham, and his business. Guayaquil had been the worst pest-hole in the world; half the time steamers could not stop there on account of yellow fever, and now it was clean and he had helped to make it so. He told about Walter Reed and Dr. Lazear, and Anna Ruth felt the blood warm round her heart. Here was another person like Miss Harriet — but she tried to avoid thinking of Miss Harriet — and

also like the man and woman who had taken her to the top of the mountain when she went to find poor Roger. She could not think of Roger either.

'Trillions of mosquitoes bred in these swamps,' explained Dr. Allingham. 'Some were malarial and some weren't, and they used to catch samples from various sections and spray 'em with paint, then they could tell where the dangerous ones came from.'

Presently she told her name.

'And where are you going?'

'To Arequipa.' She grew pale.

'Have you friends there?'

'A friend.'

Allingham guessed her errand and, being himself young, blushed.

'Are you going to be married?'

'Yes,' answered Anna Ruth. 'I guess so.'

'Surely you know!'

'Yes.' But misgiving pierced her soul; she folded her arms so that she might press three worn letters against her breast.

Allingham continued to talk; speech seemed as necessary to him as to Freddy Barrington and to the kindly truckman who brought her down the mountain, but his talk was not of the superiority of men or the charms of a sweetheart, but of the

superiority of locks to sea-level canals and the genius of men who conquered fever and solved stupendous problems of engineering. Goethals, Gorgas, de Lesseps, and again Walter Reed — Anna Ruth listened and lost account of her surroundings. Arthur used to talk in the same earnest, hurried way as though time were not long enough for a contemplation of the wonders of the world. She heard the mighty history of this narrow neck of land: of Balboa, who strode into the Pacific and claimed it for his king; of Drake, who seeing the ocean from a tree-top prayed that he might live to sail an English ship upon it; of Morgan with his ruffians; of Paterson with his pious Scots. Allingham's cheeks grew red and his handsome gray eyes danced.

'Do I bore you?' he asked, laughing.

'No!' protested Anna Ruth. With faltering tongue she made a brave essay. 'And there was Pizarro!'

'Well, rather!' laughed Allingham. 'So you know about him!'

Now Anna Ruth talked as she had talked but once in her life — to Keller late at night. Her subject was the same, Francisco Pizarro, Hernando Pizarro, Atahualpa — from her lips rolled great names. In the midst of her discourse the

steamer entered a passage between concrete piers.

'This is it?' she asked in awe.

Allingham nodded. 'This is it.'

The steamer came to a halt, and was made fast by mighty cables to towing engines on the concrete walls; a giant chain was lowered into the water so that it might pass. The passengers moved excitedly about, a few idle observers watched the miracle from the wall above. The steamer moved, mammoth gates closed behind it, and it began to rise slowly as the lock filled. Mammoth gates opened before it upon the same level of water; the gates behind it closed and again it rose. The third lock lifted it into a forest-bordered lake and having passed through the narrow cut beyond it descended as it had risen.

Dr. Allingham took Anna Ruth's arm and escorted her from side to side, talking all the while.

'See how thick the woods are! You couldn't get in without hewing your way with a machete. See how light the green of the forest is, not like any northern forest.'

'No,' said Anna Ruth as though she had seen many forests. There was certainly nothing here

to recall the cool air and the lacy pines and the brown water of Lovers' Creek.

Allingham talked learnedly of geology, of fossils and basalt breccia, of volcanic clay and tufa. This isthmus, he said, was once the bottom of the sea.

Anna Ruth listened, round-eyed. 'Oh, I'll learn!' she vowed. 'I'll learn everything!'

In a golden sunset she looked at the rocky islands of the Pacific. There was a long mole with trains and waiting ships and beyond beauty and loneliness and vastness.

'I, Anna Ruth!' she cried to her amazed and incredulous heart. 'I, Anna Ruth!'

'I suppose you know all about the stars,' she said aloud to Allingham.

'A little. Would you like to look at the sky after dark?'

'Oh, yes!' sighed Anna Ruth.

In the night Anna Ruth woke and looked out. A fresh breeze was blowing, the sea rushed past, the strange stars wheeled against a deep dark sky. Alpha Crucis, Beta Crucis, Gamma Crucis, Delta Crucis — she must not forget their names, so happily recalled by this kind stranger.

'O God!' prayed Anna Ruth, 'do not let me die!'

There came another day of sunshine and light

breeze, then a sudden change into fog, then cold and dreariness. Anna Ruth lay in her berth, past Colombia, past most of Ecuador. The whistle hailing the Equator blew unheard, whales spouted unseen. Allingham, coming to say good-bye, declared that seals and sea-lions sported near the shore and that, if the clouds lifted, she might have a glimpse of snowy Chimborazo. But Anna Ruth could only smile.

'You're better; you must get up to-morrow and see Tumbez where your friend Pizarro landed. Will you?'

Anna Ruth promised.

'Will you write me a letter?'

This Anna Ruth promised also. She wept forlornly when the door closed.

In the morning she rose and watched a dismal shore. Once, far away under lifting mist, she believed she saw snow-tipped mountains; then the mist shut down. When it lifted again it was only enough to show the bleak and desert shore. Thousands of birds flew with the steamer, pelicans which she recognized, some sort of black duck, and many smaller birds. Friendly passengers spoke to her, and at Callao the missionaries invited her to go ashore with them. Near by was Lima where reposed the bones of

Pizarro, known and discoursed of learnedly and familiarly by Anna Ruth; but weak in body and mind, she gave no heed. Suppose Arthur should have died? Suppose he should have come to the end of patience and love? She sat on deck only half-seeing the barren hills, the bold cape, the bare island opposite.

The Captain teased her when the steamer was once more under way.

'Only two more days for you, young lady. We haven't seen much of you.'

'No,' said Anna Ruth. She moved steadily, but lightly as a feather.

The Captain took a mean advantage of confidence.

'We've got to feed you up for that young man.'

Anna Ruth blushed scarlet and a silence fell upon the table. Her companions looked at her with smiling interest.

'O God!' prayed Anna Ruth. 'Let Arthur be there and everything be all right!'

'The landing at Mollendo is difficult,' said a man, seeking to make conversation. 'You're swung from the lighter to the wharf in a chair.'

'But you get there,' said the Captain. 'Nobody ever got hurt or drowned that I heard of. It's fun. You're not afraid, are you?'

'No,' answered Anna Ruth thickly. 'No.'

A day, a night, a day, a night without sleep, and a gray and somber morning. Anna Ruth's new trunk was on the lower deck and Anna Ruth stood beside it together with the missionaries and a few men. There was the open roadstead and there the sweeping billow. Overhead hung clouds, round about undulated the gray sea, a half-mile away, set against brown and barren hills was a small town with brightly painted house-roofs.

The missionaries spoke kindly; there was something profoundly pathetic about this pale and slender creature.

'We do hope you'll be happy.'

'Oh, thank you!'

'You go to Arequipa, do you?'

'Yes.'

'Then you go with us.'

'I take a train,' volunteered Anna Ruth. A steamer seemed a safe and homelike place, a train strange and perilous. 'I don't see where it is, but I know I take a train.'

'We'll find the train,' promised one of the women.

'Do you know a minister?' faltered Anna Ruth.

'Yes, we know several.'

'And persons can be married?'

The women laughed.

'Oh, yes, easily and properly and tightly.'

The engines ceased to throb, the steamer rocked under the impact from the surge. A motor-boat approached the side.

'Now here, young lady!'

Trusting to an outstretched hand, Anna Ruth descended the perilous stairway into the unsteady craft. The missionaries followed, then two men. She heard a loud 'good-bye' and looked up into the faces of her fellow travelers who went to still more distant ports.

'Good-bye! Good luck!' A single voice called 'Happiness! Happiness!'

'I'm afraid!' said Anna Ruth, deep in her heart. It was not the great wave she feared; she thought regretfully of Duke Street, of Miss Randall, of kind Mr. Line, of her home, even of Beauty, who smelled of tea and coffee and bananas and gasoline. It seemed years and years since she had left them. The boat dipped into the trough of the sea and all was lost — steamer and desolate shore. 'I am alone!'

The missionaries, who were both pale, kept up a conversation in order to forget their own dis-

comfort and to hearten Anna Ruth. The older of the two had harsh, irregular features, but her brown eyes were those of a Madonna.

'It's hard to realize,' said she, 'that beyond and above that desolation is indescribable majesty and beauty.'

With her hands clasped across her breast, Anna Ruth sat with bent head saying nothing. Thus she had looked when she knew that her mother would speak no more and when she came at last to believe that Arthur would write no more.

'Courage, my dear!' said the kind voice.

The giant billow rolled as it had rolled for untold ages, the little rocking boat hung for an instant under something which looked like a giant hand reaching out for prey, Anna Ruth was lifted and put into a chair and swung upward; with the sickening motion life seemed to leave her small frame. She heard a voice, but she believed that she dreamed it. It said, 'Anna Ruth! Is it you, Anna Ruth!' She opened her eyes; it was not a stormy night and there was no icy rain on her cheek. The sky was gray but not stormy, and the air was warm and sultry. She had not dreamed the voice; with eyes as wide and incredulous as Anna Ruth's, Arthur Wynne looked

down at the ascending chair. Miss Harriet had remembered before it was too late the existence of cables and the possibility of doing something for those whom she loved, however selfishly.

The chair came to a halt and Anna Ruth's heart with it. Her eyes were blinded, her breath choked; it was as though she were at this moment born into the world. An arm round her lifted her down, moved her away from danger. Mountains, sky, sea, the myriads of birds, the chair swinging out for a new passenger — all were nothing.

'I came as soon as I could,' she wept. 'As soon as I had your letters, I came. I hadn't forgotten. But everything went wrong.'

Arthur had no inclination to weep; he laughed, and with his free hand he waved to the steamer far out across the sea. The whistle was sounding a deep boom — he knew the jovial ways of captains. He surmised correctly that upon him many curious glances were turned. He was taller, mature, and now inexpressibly content. The head of the older missionary appeared above the wharf and, still holding Anna Ruth to his side, he put out his hand to help steady the swinging chair. The woman looked straight at him, her eyes on a level with his, in their single bright flash curiosity and concern, then relief.

'I wish you happiness,' she said from her uneasy perch.

Arthur looked down at the head pressed to his side, then up into the pleasant eyes. He grew pale, as though frightened by the preciousness of his possession.

'I expect to have happiness,' he answered, smiling. Against his side Anna Ruth was whispering.

'I'm nothing,' she declared in wonder, and believed it. 'I have nothing and I know nothing,' and believed this also. 'And I, Anna Ruth, am *here!*'

THE END

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